

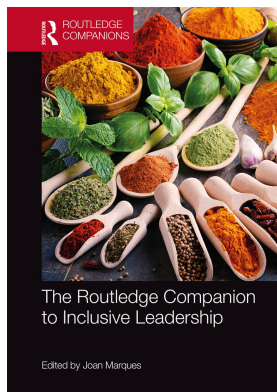
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## The Routledge Companion to Inclusive Leadership

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### Leading as One

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# 3

## LEADING AS ONE

### Inclusive Leadership Through Unity Consciousness and the Act of Oneness

*Duysal Aşkun*

#### **Introduction**

The world today has immense problems, ranging from physical, societal, political, economic and climatic to, finally, consciousness-related. The tip of the iceberg that represents those problems we see as climate change, terrorism, economic downfalls, massive attacks, educational shortcomings and political turmoil all have underlying mechanisms that sometimes feel invisible but remain strong and active. All of us as human beings inhabit this planet earth. As individuals, we bring what we have to this life as single personalities, then as societies and cultures. What we believe, think, feel and behave all have consequences for life on earth. Although seemingly we might be very consumed with our own individual lives and how we will overcome our individual problems, our social standing is always there. No matter what we do on a small or a larger scale, there is always a consequence. Although why and how we do things remain a little bit out of the scope of this paper, we can assume with confidence that the whys and hows also matter to a large extent.

Among nations, societies, cultures and small groups like families, there's always been a person who assumes a role that has more influence than that assumed by the rest of the group that they represent. Over centuries of human existence, this role has extended far beyond its planned course of action. The most extreme cases are represented by such legendary leaders as Alexander the Great, Augustus Caesar, Napoleon Bonaparte, Cleopatra, Jesus Christ, John F Kennedy, Mahatma Gandhi, Joan of Arc, Hitler, Martin Luther King and many others. I'm confident that none of us would say we've never heard of any of those figures while we were growing up. Through storytelling, history class or any kind of educational program, we were introduced to these leaders in one way or the other. Although the way we might have coded their presence may differ, there's been a standard way of getting to know them, usually through their actions and the changes they have made in their societies.

That is what a leader does—they take action, and changes follow those actions. The actions may include written codes of conduct, meeting reports, starting a new constitution or conquering a new land. No matter what the changes are, they have been made possible by the influential role that the leader took at that period of time and space. As time passed, the circumstances might have changed and the outcomes might not be as valid as they once were, but the influence is there.

How does the leader create those actions? What is the underlying mechanism that we talk about today?

There is a simple psychological mechanism that might serve very well in terms of explaining it. Everyone takes action, and so does the leader. The actions are tangible and visible motions that carry

energy. Their visible nature comes from the energy that lies within the actor. That energy is rooted in consciousness. But what is consciousness?

We may not yet say that consciousness lies at a specific location in the brain. Despite new scientific discoveries, it is still somewhat of a mystery. However, we can try to define it, as nowadays many researchers are working on the construct which is defined as

the state or quality of awareness, or, of being aware of an external object or something within oneself. It has been defined variously in terms of sentience, awareness, qualia, subjectivity, the ability to experience or to feel, wakefulness, having a sense of selfhood or soul, the fact that there is something “that it is like” to “have” or “be” it, and the executive control system of the mind.

*(Wikipedia: Consciousness)*

In other words, consciousness is awareness of that which happens inside.

How about those actions that stem from the level of consciousness? Meaning, what do the actions look like when there is less consciousness, more consciousness or somewhere in between? Is there still an action? Are we able to create actions even if we are less conscious?

The answer might be “Yes,” as we can observe children, who are less conscious at a certain age, but can still create a course of action. Don’t they? They are active from day 1, and their actions might differ as they mature over the years. As an example, in the first 3 to 5 years of life, a child may not always calculate the consequence of his/her actions and therefore might get involved in aggressive acts, without understanding the consequences of them, either for his/her own self or for the other.

As we age, we learn by experience that our actions have consequences and that we might be punished for harmful acts. However, this “way of knowing” doesn’t always lead to zero aggression. In fact, the world is increasingly suffering from violent acts. Therefore, we might conclude that “knowing” in the sense of change in cognition doesn’t always lead to “a positive behavior.”

Similar observations can be made in the current world of business. There are many leaders with names like CEO, COO, general manager, manager and supervisor. Yet there are also many people who might get hurt, feel left out, underperform, feel demotivated or might finally decide to leave the organization because of certain leader actions. Those actions can be in the form of decisions, verbal acts or manners. However, they come into existence as a result of the “leader’s level of consciousness” that determines the day-to-day maneuvers of the leader.

With many things going on, leaders may or may not be fully aware, meaning their consciousness might not have evolved to the extent that they are completely in control of their decisions, words and manners. As the world of business becomes more complex, therefore more demanding, the goals and immediate pressures might make things worse for leaders to grasp and take control of what is happening inside, outside and in between, and the calculation of some outcomes becomes even harder.

In this “state of ambivalence,” leaders choose the actions that are most readily available to them, usually automatic reactions that they generate in times of stress. These automatic reactions are the ones to which we usually refer depending on our “level of consciousness.” And that might be a key term that might help us define both the problem and the solution for our work life today.

### **Consciousness and Leadership Behavior**

Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991) argued that although leadership study has moved beyond traits to behaviors and situational approaches, a shift back to a modified trait theory involving the personal qualities of leaders is occurring. Theories of who the leader is help us understand one important aspect of leadership—the character of the individual leader. These theories do not do much to predict future leaders or any kind of leader behavior. They also do not help in leadership development

training. New, more operationally specific theories were needed, and theorists turned their attention to another thread, focusing on the leader's behavior.

To cope with this lack of certainty about what makes an effective leader, some researchers began to rethink leadership as something distinct from leaders and rather start to reconceptualize it as a theory of social interaction which involved follower dynamics, relationships, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, organizational culture, organizational change and power that would help us to understand what variables were of influence in terms of the effectiveness of leaders (Fairholm & Fairholm, 2009).

### ***Leadership Happens in Relationships***

Leadership is relational. It is an interpersonal connection between the leader and the followers based on mutual needs and interests (Fairholm & Fairholm, 2009). Kouzes and Posner (1990) argued that leadership is a reciprocal relationship between those who choose to lead and those who choose to follow. Unless there is a relationship, there is no venue within which to practice leadership. It is something we experience in an interaction with the other. Leadership is a form of consciousness in which people are aware that they exist in a state of interconnectedness with all life and seek to live in a manner that nourishes and honors that relationship at all levels of actions. Jacobsen (1994) indicated that the leader's values and leadership itself are related and that leaders view the personal and group values and the secular world as inherent in each other—that is, all leadership is values driven and relationship based.

### ***An Important Tool: Relational Consciousness***

Coined by Hay and Nye in 1998, relational consciousness refers to the ability of children to perceive the world in relational terms. The consciousness here is mainly relational, existing in the intra- and the interpersonal domain. More than being simply alert and attentive, relational consciousness represents being aware of one's cognitive activity with regards to a certain context. Mainly rooted in Nye's observations with children, relational consciousness was classified usually along four dimensions, between the self and the God, the self and other people, the self and the world, and finally the children's consciousness of a relationship with their own selves (Hay, 2010).

Although this concept has been discovered through studies with children, as I mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, consciousness is something that might not change according to age; in fact, there are studies that demonstrate that some people can become even more "egocentric" as they age (McDonald & Stuart-Hamilton, 2003; Salthouse, 1991; Desrocher & Smith, 1998). And how to cultivate more consciousness so as to include the other in one's world remains an important topic to explore and research. As no two people perceive and understand the world in the same way, it becomes a mystery how to reconcile those cognitions to come up with positive outcomes, as is the case of organizations with a positive climate, positive conflict resolution, effective and productive teamwork, positive leader-member interactions, citizenship behaviors, etc.

In line with our topic here, the leader and the follower form a dyad in which they share a space, where they might have problems stemming from different perceptions, understandings and behaviors that might lead to negative outcomes. Here, the space that they create might be large or small, accessible or inaccessible, easy to enter or not so easy. I call this space the "area of interpersonal consciousness" which might serve for both, for one only or for no one.

### ***What Is a Consciousness Gap?***

When two individuals interact, each chooses a way of communication or an action that reflects the level of consciousness one possesses. And in between those two individuals, *an area of interpersonal*

consciousness is formed. Each person in the dyad has access to that area and an understanding of it. Having more access reflects one's level of interpersonal consciousness that involves:

- Awareness of the possible effects of one's actions/words
- Understanding and a sensitivity towards the other's feelings and cognitions
- A felt need or an interest to better understand what the other is really feeling/thinking

A consciousness gap forms and unfortunately widens when:

- Personal awareness does not expand (expanding self) towards a more interpersonal consciousness
- A personal need/interest/problem gets in the way of mutual fulfillment and an experience of interpersonal consciousness
- A selfish orientation that stems from fear, anxiety or a desire for getting more of each interaction that leads the individual to pull more of him- or herself towards his/her own self (contracting self)

### ***What Are Some of the End Results of the Consciousness Gap?***

Unfortunately, experiencing a consciousness gap is common in organizations because of the following end results experienced:

- Reported feelings of being hurt, misunderstood and resentful after certain actions/words are expressed by the other party (coworker, manager, client, etc.)
- Demotivation related to certain types of mistreatment by a manager or a related party
- Increased mobbing rates reported or unreported
- Decisions made about leaving the organization, in other words, increasing turnover rates
- Break-up of teamwork because of increased conflicts
- Escalating dysfunctional conflict between several work dyads

If we depict this as a series of figures:

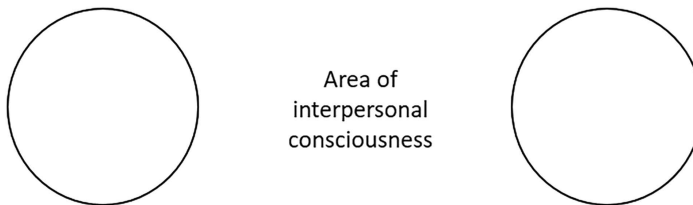


Figure 3.1 Area of interpersonal consciousness

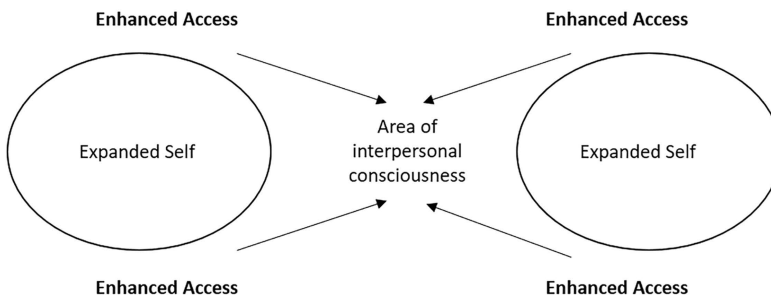


Figure 3.2 Expanded self

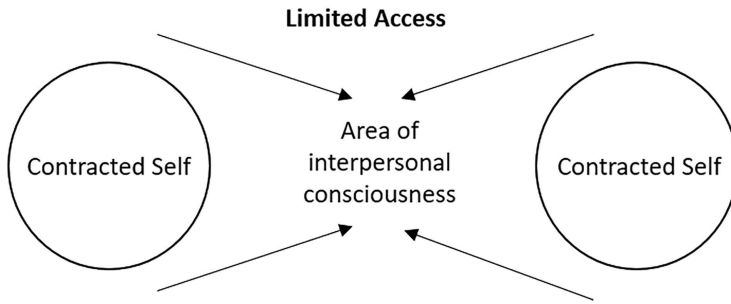


Figure 3.3 Contracted self

### Limited Access

Depending on the expansiveness of the self, which is enabled through the level and type of consciousness, the area between the two individuals either becomes a “oneness zone” or a “war zone.”. Here, the important thing is to understand how to use some tools to enhance that level of understanding; hence, how to reduce the gap in consciousness between the two.

### Using Awareness as a Tool

Being aware, both internally and externally, is an important tool to consider. Awareness, if implemented in the right way and at the right time, can be a crucial tool to enhance our consciousness level and type. Here a popular term, mindfulness, comes into the picture with certain definitions, rules and practices that follow. Representing nonjudgmental awareness of the present moment and what it all brings (Brown & Ryan, 2003), mindfulness, even with all the criticisms associated with its highly popularized notion without any guarantee for positive outcomes, especially at the level of employee well-being and life standards (Purser, 2019: McMindfulness), could still be considered a viable tool for enhancing personal awareness. However, mindfulness alone, without the necessary awareness work carried out at the cognitive (mind), emotional (soul) and behavioral (body) levels, would not be an adequate tool, as enhancing one’s consciousness needs awareness work at all levels of being, which involves all parts: mind, body and soul. As much as possible, all need to be in sync to benefit from the process of awareness in any part.

### The Individual as One

“The individual,” coming from the Latin root “*individuum*,” means indivisible, united, integrated, whole and actually One. Oneness is not the same thing as sameness, as sameness implies “no difference between the parts of a whole.” As Atkinson (2011, p. 3) points out, “Unity in diversity is not just a slogan or buzz phrase. It is a way of explaining the principle of humanity’s oneness with itself and the entire creation.” As has already been put forward many times, the individual is composed of body, mind and soul. And the well-being associated with the individual is reflected in connection between those three parts, which should be working in harmony with each other without any energy leakage from any part.

It is hard to be a human. Because we are born with our flesh, it naturally reminds us of our mortality and the fact that we are separate from others. This constantly leaves us with the separate body-related consciousness that has needs on a daily and hourly basis. It is our body that needs to be fed, needs to go to bed and needs to feel good all the time. It sometimes may function so independently

that we may forget what our soul yearns for. The needs of the soul can in fact be quite different. Instead of bodily needs, the soul may want to go to places, to experience different things with different people. Instead of the security of a job, the soul may want to do whatever it wants at that moment or place. The soul has a complete need to be free, whereas the body by nature is trapped in the here and now, in this house, city or country.

Where does mind fit in this picture? Between the needs of the body and soul, the mind, if it is healthy and functional, tries to find the common solution and the middle ground. However, if the individual loses access to either body or soul or both, the mind starts to dominate. It creates enormous amounts of unnecessary thought, worry, duty, needs and all sorts of dysfunctional things. Because of its busy nature, the mind usually stays in the moment for only very short intervals, and goes to the past or future. The mind's way of going to the past manifests as recurrent regrets, sadness over the past and remembrances that are often negative. These involvements with the past are carried over into the future as worries, fears and all different sorts of anxieties of what might happen next (expectation that the past may repeat).

However, if the individual manages to access both the body and soul, his or her mind has a chance to function in the present, working out many solutions related to needs, desires, visions and dreams. And this leads to being able to receive gifts, untie knots, solve many issues and take a different perspective related to problems in life.

### ***Having or Not Having Access to Body and Soul***

How does an individual achieve having access to both body- and soul-related consciousness? For example, how do you know whether you need to rest or work at a given time and place? How do you know whether it is now time to leave your current job and move on to a different one? How do you know when it is time to end this relationship/worry/thought/dysfunctional pattern of being? How can you manage stress regarding your busy workload? Where does it all fit in?

As listed earlier, these types of problems can be resolved only if the individual has access to body and soul with the help of momentary awareness, now usually called mindfulness. As the term itself implies, mindfulness has been widely researched in the literature, with many studies exploring the concept from both theoretical and practical perspectives. There have been findings related to mindfulness training, meditations as a tool for mindfulness, mindfulness as a state of mind, as a skill of staying in the moment, etc. Brown, Ryan, and Creswell (2007) have defined mindfulness as being rooted in the fundamental activities of consciousness: attention and awareness. Mindfulness was also associated with flexibility, being as actively engaged with the observed experience. In short, mindfulness is noticing what is present, including noticing that one is no longer present. Recognizing that one is not being attentive and aware is itself considered to be an indication of mindfulness, which can be considered a quality of consciousness.

This means that with the help of consciousness, you can see the current desirous states of the body and the soul, which have special ways/styles of communicating with the individual.

Conversely, when you do not have access to any of them, such as to the soul, you may feel one or more of the following:

- Life making no sense to you—frequent feelings of boredom and emptiness
- Chronic depressive mood
- No feelings of life satisfaction even with worldly achievements or considerably high income
- Dependent or shallow relationships
- Not being able to stay alone for a certain period
- Constant need for communication with others or shutting down all types of communication
- Chronic physical symptoms, and even physical dysfunction requiring constant medical care



- People complaining about you from behind, for example your family members, your subordinates
- Feelings of anger even with little daily hurdles
- No or very little motivation to work and do things

And when you do not have access to the body, these are possible:

- Prolonged or acute obesity
- Rapid weight loss
- Catching flu easily
- Few or no leisure activities
- Workaholic or type A behavior
- Constant feelings of fatigue
- Unwanted life conditions such as uncomfortably small house, noisy city or workplace and even uncomfortable bed
- Insomnia or too much need for sleep
- Acute or chronic medical conditions (any part of the body)
- Unhappiness and lack of energy for daily endeavors

Any of the preceding are possible when you lose access to body or soul. And the mind cannot do anything to help, but instead will worsen or help create these situations. As for the root of the word psychology, it comes from the Greek word “*psyche*” meaning “the reason for the soul.” It is no coincidence that when people have certain psychopathologies or pathologies of any kind, they have a sense of “no purpose.”

Balance the Body and Soul, Wants and Goals, Shoulds and Is's, Wishes and Fears. . .

“Watch out! Open your eyes; perceive the trap of the carnal self. Move on to the station of the Beloved; what better station could there be?”

*Yunus Emre, Turkish Sufi Poet (by Grace Martin Smith, 1993)*

With the help of awareness, the individual can be aware of all the different forces, needs, desires, wishes, goals and musts coming from different sources. And the first reaction is “surprise, not knowing what to do” which is quite normal. But sometimes the reaction might also be “fear,” and when this is felt, the person can only go directly to protect oneself in the situation, nothing else. To keep one's integrity or wholeness, in other words, to keep it altogether, the individual might lose his or her mind (sanity), and this can be destructive to both oneself and others. Sometimes it is that one wish that might create the reaction. Freud talked a good deal about this. There are many writings and practical methodologies regarding one's self dealing with one's unwanted, threatening wishes. And yes, wishes can create a fear reaction inside of us, as well as a real-life horrifying situation. What is true for us can be very frightening and, thus, we might hide it, even from ourselves. Thus, awareness can create a lot of discomfort, a lot of confusion. But think of it as a necessary step to enhance your consciousness at the mind, body and soul levels. Between worries of the future and regrets and frustration from the past, you feel trapped. Let me stop at this point and tell you a story of the old man and his grandson.

*One day the grandson says to his grandfather:*

*“Granddad, you have a long beard. I wonder something about it. During the night while at sleep, do you hide your beard underneath your sheets, or do you take your beard out?”*

*Granddad puzzled, gets upset with his grandson's stupid question and says:*

*“What is in it for you? Why do you wonder about such a thing?”*



*Grandson stays silent and the Grandfather forgets about it during the day. Then, at night, when the old man was happily going to sleep, remembers the conversation about the beard. He hides it and then tries to go to sleep. . . . Some moments pass. No sleep. And then he does the opposite. Moments pass. No sleep. Granddad goes back to hiding it again, time passes, and he starts counting the sheep. . . . No use.*

*The next day, after a night of insomnia, the first thing he does in the morning is to go to the barbershop. He has his beard shaved off completely.*

(Wholey, 2016)

This is what awareness can do to us. It might come in many different forms and in such abrupt moments that we might end up with a serious change to stop our discomfort without knowing what to do with the current situation. In any case, our consciousness helps with our balance in the long run, whatever the cost is in the short run.

### ***Moving From One-Self to the Other: The Invisible Space Between Us***

*A girl and a boy are suddenly in love. They are in Vienna, Austria. They talk endlessly about life, relationships and people. And during one conversation about where God may be, the girl says to the boy: "There is no one place to locate God, but if I had to locate God, I would say, it is in the space, that exists between you and me, space filled by our common effort to understand each other."*

(Linklater, Krizan & Brandenstein, 1995)

Osho (2011) says, if we are neurotic, our relationships will be more neurotic, and the world neuroticism will be multiplied because of those relationships. This might be translated as "losing our self-balance leading to imbalanced relationships." As relationships are strong means to create our world, what we create with that imbalanced state would not be very attractive, but destructive. From the smallest type of organizational entity like a nuclear family to the largest one like a giant organization, company or governmental entity, it is evident that "interdependence" is the most important asset, since no one alone can accomplish a goal just by him- or herself anymore. The world is way too complicated to do things alone now.

However, when there are individual goals and accomplishments existing side by side with group goals and organizational vision, conflict inevitably occurs. Our fragile selves and our individual needs and desires sometimes interfere with our organizational goals and vision. Throughout that conflict, the following might occur:

- Chronic and unresolved interpersonal disputes
- Negative group dynamics
- Hurt feelings.
- Dysfunctional teamwork
- Nonproductive work processes
- Miscommunication
- Negative rumors
- Fear inside the organization
- Decreasing levels of individual and group motivation
- Decreasing levels of job satisfaction
- Mobbing-related issues
- Low performance levels
- Increasing turnover and turnover intentions

In the short run, these types of organizational outcomes lead to distress and uneasy feelings, negative climate inside the organization and finally, the organizational breakdown by losing market share, losing members or followers, diminishing levels of competitive power in the long run. As for interdependence to happen between individuals, groups, departments and the whole organization, the following has to be there:

- Whole individuals
- Individual and collective consciousness
- Fearless workplace
- Information and resource sharing
- Open communication and trust for the other
- Free but respectful individual expression
- Positive approach to relationships
- Showing empathy for oneself and for the others
- Listening to others with true interest and respect
- Ownership of organizational problems and tasks
- Value for both the individual and the team and none of them sacrificed for the other
- Humiliating no one
- Hurting no one
- Individual and relational honesty
- Objective performance appraisals
- Elimination of any kind of injustice and prejudice
- Harmony inside the teams/departments
- Collaboration and consensus between groups and individuals
- Citizenship behavior
- Helping/supporting behaviors
- Rewarding success and recognizing individual achievements
- Leader bringing out the best in subordinates
- Work and family life balance at all levels of the organization
- No workaholics, but a self-disciplined workforce
- Problem solving and conflict resolution approach
- Both individual and team orientation balancing each other
- Individuals working to their fullest potentials
- Working for the same vision held by all parties
- Personal and group awareness of common goals
- Acknowledgment of the interdependency between the parties
- Commitment to learning and change at all levels
- Positive approach to double loop learning

Actually, more can be added to this list, but these are some basic principles if one wants to create oneness inside an organization. As can be seen, a lot of effort needs to be spent on the part of individuals to share, communicate, reach out, help and support, co-create, evaluate, collaborate and come together with others so that the organization is healthy and functional.

### ***Leading as One***

As we follow from the unity of mind-body and soul inside the individual, it is of enormous importance to look at some leadership perspectives that define and depict that kind of unity concerning the leader as an “individual.”

## States of Being

Initially, Graves (1970) had talked about “states of being” or “levels of existence” that represented the power of individual values and personal perception in shaping thoughts and actions. Graves’s work reflects the understanding that a certain level of existence one holds has a determining power over our values and then our actions and relationships. Operating at a certain level uses a related mindset for problem solution and a certain choice of action, especially in our relationships with other people. Another state of being would lead to acting differently, using different values and ethics that would lead to judging the appropriateness of a certain behavior.

Therefore, a leadership mindset can be conceptualized as complex levels of mental, emotional and even behavioral awareness. Here, leadership could even be described as a holarchical system (Koestler, 1970) of transcendent perspectives of social interaction based on values, vision, direction of action and, obviously, free choice.

Here, a more recent and a relevant approach to this type of leadership comes from Egel and Fry (2017), who explicitly articulated the achievement of “being-centered” leadership.

### *Being-Centered Leadership With a Global Mindset*

As the world of work is becoming more diverse each day, the idea of “global leadership” comes to the fore even more than in the past. As we have more enhanced levels of technology and working capabilities enabled through increased levels of skill, knowledge and abilities, the management and leadership of a highly diverse and skilled workforce becomes even more fundamental than before. According to Egel and Fry (2017), global leadership requires leaders to have the specific capability of integrating the needs of diverse stakeholders while balancing the goals of economic profits, social impact and environmental sustainability, referred to as the *triple bottom line*, or *3 Ps* denoting people, planet and profit (Fry & Nisiewicz, 2013; as cited in Egel & Fry, 2017).

Here, the idea of “being-centered” leadership incorporates multiple levels of knowing and being that stems mainly from the global mindset and its core properties, which are existentialist, cognitive and behavioral (Levy, Beechler, Taylor, & Boyacigiller, 2007; as cited in Egel & Fry, 2017). In terms of its conceptualization, the cognitive component involves knowledge structures, the ability to interpret and develop, attention, sense making and conceptualization. The existentialist component represents state of mind, way of being, orientation, awareness and openness. And the behavioral component, which we focus most on here, represents the ability to adapt, curiosity, seeking opportunities and a propensity to engage. Here Egel and Fry (2017) suggest that global leaders with a global mindset must be conscious, self-aware and also self-transcendent. And in contrast, an unconscious, self-centered mindset reflects biased interpretations that would naturally lead to stereotypical behaviors towards other cultures and groups. In other words, this type of mindset would lead to “not seeing the other as is, but through one’s own personal restricted lenses.” This is very similar to the idea of “contracted self,” which we discussed briefly earlier.

Fry and Kriger (2009) explain five levels of knowing and being that lead to different leadership approaches. At level 5, we mainly talk about leadership that is based on leader traits and behavior that are appropriate to the context. This is the type of leadership we commonly observe today in many cultures, societies, and workplaces. At level 4, leadership is based on images and a social construction of reality. At level 3, leadership is based on the individual being conscious and self-aware moment to moment in relation to others. At level 2, there is a spiritual leadership that is based on love and service and presence in the now. At level 1, leadership is based on oneness and constant reconciliation of apparent opposites. At level 1, there is a transcendent unity that represents transcendence of all opposites and the realization of self-actualization. This level of being is very *inclusive* in that it might contain both pure emptiness and pure completeness. This type of being goes beyond all types

of distinctions, even the distinction between leader and follower. Here the experience of duality (in other words, separation) is said to dissolve, and the potential of being the leader or the follower resides in each person at each moment in time. The roles could be reversed if the situation would call for it. This type of being is defined as being more aspirational rather than reflecting the current reality in organizational settings today.

Another related and inspiring leadership type comes from Fairholm and Fairholm (2009), who put forward the concept of “whole-soul” leadership.

### *Whole-Soul Leadership*

As we are all made up of mind-body and soul, the interaction of those parts of us and operation of the self beyond the sum of those parts is imperative to the idea of “wholeness.” By increased self-awareness, acceptance and related action, less fear thus a less “contracted self” would be the outcome (Aşkun, 2015). According to Fairholm and Fairholm (2009), the whole-soul leadership concept involves certain key elements below:

1. Showing concern for and integration of the whole-soul of leader and followers
2. Setting individuals free so they can grow constantly
3. Enabling individual wholeness in one’s community
4. Developing an intelligent organization
5. Setting moral standards
6. Inspiring
7. Freeing followers to build communities of stewardship
8. Modeling a service orientation

These types of leaders appreciate and cherish what is happening at the moment and look for what is best in every person or situation. This is about leading not just from one’s personality but also from a connected awareness. In relation to this understanding, Schaetti, Ramsey, and Watanabe (2009), in their discussion on “intercultural competencies of leaders,” outline six practices for personal leadership:

- Attending to judgment
- Attending to emotion
- Attending to physical sensation
- Cultivating stillness
- Engaging ambiguity
- Aligning with vision

Here, right action represents a sense of wholeness and completion instead of ultimate or absolute truth. As the leader practices personal leadership, mindfulness and creativity require us to find that one right action according to that moment in time, which may not be so right in another moment in time. This type of choice to act in the right way is said to come with practice.

### *Inclusive Leadership and Oneness*

As a term coined by Nemhard and Edmondson (2006), inclusive leaders are those who demonstrate openness, accessibility and availability in their interactions with their followers (Carmeli, Reiter-Palmon, & Ziv, 2010; as cited in Choi, Tran, & Kang, 2017). These reflect the leaders’ care and concern for others as well as their willingness to communicate their expectations to the other party, such

as followers (Choi et al., 2017). Inclusive leadership was also defined as a form of relational leadership (Carmeli et al., 2010), which means availability and willingness to listen, while paying attention to followers' needs (Choi et al., 2017).

In their discussion related to diversity management vs. diversity leadership, Asumah, Nagel, and Rosengarten (2016) argued that diversity leadership is all about redefining and rethinking problems in creative ways and taking transformational approaches to overcoming difficult dialogues while raising human consciousness to implement goals and policies to reach inclusive excellence. They stress that the leaders of diversity must walk their talk. Using the social change model, they talk about the importance of the 7 Cs of leadership: citizenship, collaboration, common purpose, controversy with civility, consciousness of self, and congruence (Komives, Wagner, & Associates, 2009; as cited in Asumah et al., 2016).

Coming to behavioral aspects of inclusive leadership, Bilimoria (2012) identified two sets of behaviors:

1. Authentically value and respect all individuals for their talents and contributions, which require leaders to behave and communicate in a way that represents authentic appreciation for diverse populations, including their skills and abilities, while being aware of their own stereotypes, biases and mental models. While appreciating all around them, they should be able to hold others accountable for any kind of disrespectful behavior. They should commit to diversity in their hiring, compensation, advancement and retention practices while maintaining a willingness to learn from diverse perspectives.
2. Actively create a high-engagement culture by encouraging the input and initiative of all employees. Leaders should constantly monitor their own behaviors, so they treat everyone and every opinion equally with respect. They should be able to cultivate a shared purpose and common vision with shared values. They should be able to create a work environment where everyone feels ok to share their viewpoints and raise their voice while feeling psychologically safe. The leaders should be able to create a fair, democratic, supportive, welcoming environment where there is transparent team decision-making and processes.

According to Bilimoria (2012), ensuring these practices will eventually help organizations transform from an exclusionary and stagnant culture, which is de-motivating and de-energizing, to an inclusive and open culture which brings out the best in people, while energizing them through encouraging collaboration and welcoming innovative approaches to problems. This way, inclusive leadership becomes the agent of an inclusive culture enriched by the diverse contributions of its members at every level of operation.

### *Appreciative Inquiry as an Imperative Tool for an Inclusive Organization*

When we go into the root meaning of *appreciative*, it means valuing, the act of recognizing the best in people or the world around us and affirming strengths and potentials. *Inquiry* means the act of exploration and discovery, asking questions while being open to seeing new potentials and possibilities (Krahnke & Cooperrider, 2008). Cooperrider and Srivastva coined the term “appreciative inquiry” in 1987 because they were unsatisfied with relying solely on the “problem solving approach.” Therefore, they replaced it with a term representing finding new ways and new methods of inquiry towards any type of organizational change that is needed (Wikipedia: Appreciative Inquiry).

Its premise rests on the infinite possibilities of the future, which connotes infinite potentials that an entity can realize. It could be a person, an organization, a department or any other. The premise is that the reality could change at any moment, depending on how you approach the issue/problem/solution. Here, the approach to time is nonlinear, as we transcend a linear understanding of time, such

as that in the endless present moment. Here the power of thought as well as no-thought and stillness is being stressed, while individuality as well as interdependence are important. Dialogue, where two individuals participate with equal respect and concern for one another, replaces debate and discussion where listening is not prominent and the focus is on who wins the game. Dialogue, by definition, means common meaning and developing something without competing, which allows both parties to see the issues from both angles while they both suspend their assumptions to allow for an open exploration (Krahnke & Cooperrider, 2008).

As they discuss this important tool that serves to open the path towards inclusive and transformative organizations, Krahnke and Cooperrider (2008) also mention the *power of wholeness*, an idea standing in contrast to the world of fragmentation, which creates so much dysfunctional conflict by the endorsement of competition and is enabled through so much “disconnection from what surrounds us.” Instead, exploring the inherent wholeness in all systems, including all living creatures and thus organizations themselves, would open up the opportunity for a healthier functioning in an open, accepting and inclusive environment. Here, appreciative inquiry is offered as an important tool that helps enable the collaborative capacities of a mixture of individuals across all levels and teams participating and exchanging ideas with diverse perspectives. Finally, appreciative inquiry is also defined not just as a technique or a tool but a way of being that leads us to see the world differently while acknowledging the good and the possible in everything and everyone.

### ***Leading as One Through the Expanded Self and Oneness Behaviors***

As a leading philosopher and scholar in oneness theory and hypothesis, Ivanhoe (2017) draws a picture of oneness that involves the nature of the relationship between oneself and others, including not only human beings but also all different sorts of creatures, such as animals, plants, mother earth, planets and even galaxies. The main premise of oneness hypothesis is that we are all inter-related. In other words, we are all interconnected at some level with each other. As an alternative to individualistic definitions of self, which is more of a Western conception, Ivanhoe (2017) talks about the relational nature of the self as part of the oneness hypothesis. Through enhanced connections with others, the self has the potential to lead a healthier and a happier life, and so do others. This way of positive connection with others might lead to even more care and compassion for all that is around us. This kind of connection with others cultivates and enhances an expanded sense of self, which does not see the others as separate but as related to one’s own self, meaning, in oneness with the personal self.

Relatedly, in line with the oneness hypothesis and conceptualization, Aşkun and Çetin (2017), in their study that described what our acts of oneness might look like, came up with two types of behavioral tendencies in people: focus on one’s self vs. consideration of the other. The first dimension reflects a tendency to behave according to one’s own self-interests, needs, goals and preferences. The second reflects behaving while considering who else is also present in one’s social environment. As an example, let’s say a leader or a manager is trying to quickly finalize a task as he or she is missing his/her own deadline. And while having this personal goal in his/her focus, he or she may ignore a subordinate’s concern about another important issue in the department. Here the manager may decide not to listen or not to respond to an urgent email, etc. Depending on his or her urgency and level of interest, he or she might even say or do things that might even harm or hurt the subordinate or colleague. Another example might be a situation where the manager is trying to plan for his/her own vacation time and might not read an email or any other kind of communication from a subordinate who might be, for example, having a family issue and would understandably like priority in terms of vacation planning. As a result of not communicating or responding, there might be related consequences for the subordinates, such as decreased motivation, feeling hurt and not valued, etc. We might think of even more examples concerning the workplace. But more important is the fact that

“not considering the other” in one’s social environment might lead to behaviors that might produce negative and dysfunctional outcomes.

How would a leader change a behavior or adopt a different behavior concerning others in the social environment? What would be an antecedent to this type of behavior so that it produces more positive and healthy results for the dyad, for the department and for the organization as a whole?

### *Path to Oneness and Inclusiveness: Unity Consciousness*

Hollick (2006) described unity consciousness as the awareness of all that is. It is transcendental, in the sense that this type of consciousness goes beyond our own personal experience, knowledge and such. In unity consciousness, there is now a blurred boundary between the self and the non-self, where separate awareness of the subject and the object is no longer present. It is important to note, however, that self as an entity would not disappear here. The self, instead, is expansive (Ivanhoe, 2017) and expands towards all (Aşkun, 2019). This is like a flexible entity that has the capability of expansion and contraction, such as the universe, which is declared to be an expansive entity.

In this unity consciousness state, there is no separate me or other, but all is one. This means not only perceiving and understanding the other as one, but also treating the other as one. This translates into several skills to develop such as:

- Empathy
- Emotional intelligence
- Altruism
- Courtesy
- Active listening
- Appreciative inquiry
- Ethical approach
- Holistic approach to self and others
- Mindfulness
- Oneness behaviors

As discussed earlier, today’s leadership approaches in theory and practice need to provide certain guidelines concerning how effective leadership should be best cultivated through training, coaching practices and consulting. It seems like unity consciousness, oneness behaviors, holistic and being-centered leadership and appreciative inquiry enriched with related skills could all be considered practical and tangible steps to take while not necessarily requiring a sequential approach.

### **Conclusion**

Leadership has been and is still an important area for research and practice today. If we think about the influential role and power of leaders for shaping our future in business, in politics, in the economy and in all areas of life, we must stop and rethink what it entails and what it should encompass in more detail, albeit in a different way. In a holographic understanding of the world and the universe, each leading entity creates a ripple effect which might in fact go very far in terms of its impact, be it positive or negative. Today, many countries and societies suffer because of negative leadership behaviors and/or lack of conscious leaders. As is outlined in this chapter to some extent, conscious leadership starts from within. For leaders to enable impactful and transformational change, they should be able to change their level and type of consciousness. To be able to lead from the top level beingness state, in other words, to be able to operate and manage in transcendence, the leader has to go beyond time and space, the duality of existence, and try to perceive, understand and treat the other with unity



consciousness. It is this type of existence that will change our world towards a healthier and a more positive state of being.

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