

A VOLUME IN THE INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP ASSOCIATION SERIES
BUILDING LEADERSHIP BRIDGES



Leading with Spirit, Presence, & Authenticity

Kathryn Goldman Schuyler
John Eric Baugher • Karin Jironet • Lena Lid-Falkman

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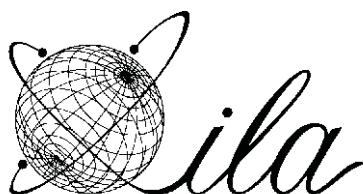
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Kathryn Goldman Schuyler

John Eric Baugher, Karin Jironet,
Lena Lid-Falkman, Editors

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The Contributors

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M. Beth Page, author, educator, speaker, consultant, and Dream Catcher Consulting founder, helps people explore and act on their leadership vision. Her recent works include *Change Happens*, *Done Deal: Your Guide to Merger and Acquisition Integration*, and a chapter in the best-selling *Awakening the Workplace*. She holds degrees from Pepperdine University, Western Illinois University, and Carleton University. A certified Emotional Intelligence Coach (EQ in Action), she is pursuing doctoral studies at the University of Victoria.

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Otto Scharmer, PhD, is a senior lecturer at MIT and founding chair of the Presencing Institute. He cofounded the Global Wellbeing Lab and is vice chair of the World Economic Forum’s Global Agenda Council on Leadership. He introduced the concept of “presencing,” learning from the emerging future, in his books *Theory U* and *Presence* (the latter co-authored with Peter Senge, Joseph Jaworski, and Betty Sue Flowers). His new book, *Leading from the Emerging Future: From Ego-system to Eco-system Economies*, focuses on transforming business, society, and self.

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Introduction: Of Leadership and Light

Kathryn Goldman Schuyler

This introduction juxtaposes questions about leadership with questions and perceptions about life, since for me the two are highly interwoven. Walk with me metaphorically as I tell you about this book and my experiences in developing it. My intention for this book is to nourish the capacity to be present, so it seems fitting to walk, notice my surroundings, and reflect on them in introducing you to the world of this book.

The day moves toward dusk, with vivid light shining through wind-blown eucalyptus trees, tossing them into a swaying dance between me and the paling blue sky, its intensity shifting as the light changes. The birds make little sounds; I imagine they are communicating to one another about food for the evening, but who knows. Perhaps they are noticing the wind and the light as well. An intense fuchsia color on a small flower catches my eye. Each blossom looks fragile and brilliant at the same time, contrasted with the darker colors of the heavier, larger plants and trees nearby. *Perhaps the intensity of a small bright flower makes as much difference as the long-lasting contribution of a bush*, I muse.

Today, between the second and third virtual meetings with the three associate editors of this book, I watched the America's Cup race from my office in San Francisco. I knew it was taking place somewhere in the billowing fog outside my windows, yet I chose to watch on screen, both because of the fog and because television can literally place the watcher on the racing boats, with the racer's view added to the spectator's view. An amazing aspect of our world: a technology that distances people from

the things happening right outside our windows can also bring us close to them in ways that we could never otherwise experience. For me, the combination of these qualities of television as a medium and the race itself brings me closer to understanding what I want this book to be for readers. In the race, we see boats labeled “New Zealand” and “USA,” yet the teams are not necessarily from those countries. The science that developed these unique new boats, with sails thirteen stories high that can race at speeds of over thirty miles an hour against the wind, also cuts across our humanly created divisions into nation-states. The funding for the boats only sometimes comes from the countries named: the New Zealanders represent Emirates Airlines and the Swiss company Nespresso, for example. The skipper of the USA boat clearly sounds like an Australian. Only one member of the so-called American team is from the United States. So is this really USA versus New Zealand? What is it?

The America’s Cup as a Metaphor for Understanding Leadership

The type of leadership required of both captains is to be fully present to the demands of the moment. Past races must not overly influence them during the current one, and they need mastery of both the subtleties of interpersonal communication among the team members and the technological complexities of these new, huge, racing catamarans. There is no either-or choice: success requires mastery of technology, one’s physical and emotional self, verbal and nonverbal communication, the crafts of sailing and racing, and much more. It means being able to use analytical intelligence, technical knowledge, strategic thinking, and environmental sensing and to be inspirational to one’s team as well. In this instance, being world class and getting to the pinnacle of success means inevitably that one team must lose; that is the nature of this contest. Such winning does not come solely from the captain’s leadership on the boat.

In this and many other settings today, leadership also means mastery of new technology, which may be contributed by unseen people behind the scenes. Changes made over the course of the series of races by technological wizards working in the background may have led to the dramatic shift in wins from one boat to the other in the middle of these sixteen races. In addition, decisions were made by other leaders off the water who inspired, managed, and funded the entire project. Leadership and winning were truly distributed and networked.

Much of this is true for leadership today. There is not just one training or way of developing leadership, and it is not just one thing. Excellent leaders may grow up in one country and lead companies or nongovernmental organizations based in another, with people on their teams from many different parts of the world. Just as the weather cannot be controlled and may be warm and sunny one day and windy with fog the next, leaders lead through all weather, all conditions, with all kinds of people. To accomplish this, they need high levels of mastery of their physical and emotional selves, verbal and nonverbal communication, the knowledge base of their endeavors, how to choose a strong team, and how to inspire appropriate, timely action. Leadership may look as if it comes from the person who is visible, but it actually depends on widely networked interactions.

Although the credit generally goes to the one person designated as “leader,” the America’s Cup race helped me see graphically how the team, the boat, and the leader can be almost indistinguishable in terms of their respective contributions. Is it the designated leader who matters most? The innate speed potential of the boat that comes from its technology? The talent of the team members and how they coordinate together? Or is success the outcome of the composite of all of these and other factors as well, like the “surround,” which in this case means the changing winds and currents? My vote is for the complex and intricate interdependence of all of these components. The issue for

leaders, leadership developers, and scholars then becomes which of these we can influence and optimally effective ways to do so.

Although there is only one winner in the game of racing, this is not so in life, business, or global society. Creating a sustainable human presence on the planet means transcending old notions of one winner and many losers. We human beings are waking up to recognize the interdependence of our actions, organizations, and societies in time and in space. As one of my students recently commented after reading the Dalai Lama's *Ethics for the New Millennium* (1999), "I saw how lazy my mind is: I think about cause and effect, but he sees long chains of causation linked with every act, every choice. I thought I was a good thinker until I saw this possibility. We are not accustomed to contemplating the interconnectedness of our actions. This interconnectedness provides a complex, comprehensive, frankly mind-blowing perspective on how we all affect one another."

Embodied Being

It may not be chance that this book follows *The Embodiment of Leadership*, last year's volume in the International Leadership Association's (ILA) Building Leadership Bridges series. I submitted this year's topic because I sensed that the ILA wishes to help its members and the larger community reframe traditional notions about the nature of leadership and contribute to increasingly healthy leadership throughout the world. This book and its structure grow out of an approach to the interdependence of embodiment, spirit, and leadership that has been developing in my work for many years.

Originally we four editors sought to include concrete stories from leaders and consultants about their work, illustrating how spirit, presence, and authenticity contribute to effectiveness in action. However, most submissions discussed concepts, reviewed relevant literature, or spoke to experiences outside the realms

of corporate or political leadership. The most graphic examples came from educators who described how they incorporate these themes into their teaching. Perhaps as leadership scholars and practitioners, we are still drawing together knowledge and experience from a range of fields that rarely interact with one another, so our models don't yet encompass the whole of what we seek to address, making it difficult to move to the stage of illuminating these models with specific stories.

For leadership scholars, educators, and consultants wishing to address leaders as full beings who are embodied, in touch with spirit, present, and thereby authentic, there are rich philosophical and practical sources to draw on. Conceptually the writings of Mark Johnson (1987, 2007), Antonio Damasio (1999), and others (Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1991) portray human beings as embodied in ways that are different from most people's commonsense notion of a physical body as a thing in which one lives for a while. Their work has not yet penetrated common social science ways of thinking and writing about what a person is as an agent of change. Few people draw on deep practices of embodiment to develop managers, leaders, and consultants. I know of none who have both consulted from such a deeply grounded embodied perspective and used this consulting experience for systematic action research. From my experience of drawing on professional somatic training in my work as an organizational change consultant, I believe that the leadership field as a whole will benefit if it is nourished by experiential forms of embodied learning that have rich theoretical and scientific roots. Among possible examples of such methods are the *Feldenkrais Method* (Feldenkrais, 1949, 1972, 1977, 1979) and Bainbridge Cohen's (2012) body-mind centering.

Such perspectives posit that we as human beings can potentially sense ourselves down to the cellular level. We can feel consciousness in our cells, fluids, tissues, bones—in all components of our selves. Embodiment offers a potential for sensing

our interconnectivity with one another and with the air, water, and earth with which we are in constant interaction. The mind is not a separate kind of entity that can think with clarity about the body: instead, it is an embodied process. “It is our organic flesh and blood, our structural bones, the ancient rhythms of our internal organs, and the pulsing flow of our emotions that give us whatever meaning we can find and that shape our very thinking” (Johnson, 2007, p. 3). Through the quirks of the way we perceive, this embodied foundation of thinking and understanding becomes invisible during what humans have come to regard as normal functioning (Johnson, 2007). The work of pioneers like Feldenkrais, Bainbridge Cohen, Varela, Johnson, and others suggests that this fundamental ground of being can be sensed, studied, and brought into leadership education and development. Embodied learning is grounded in understanding the way humans learn: through variation, noticing differences, and playful experimentation. Ideally, such learning also incorporates the human capacity for compassion, which comes from acknowledging the fundamental interdependence of all living beings.

Unending Unfoldment

Another perspective on the hidden-in-plain-view aspects of human beings can be seen in Tibetan Vajrayana traditions (Goldman Schuyler, 2012, 2013) and in Western philosophers like Spinoza. Both show how ordinary life and material things are not distinct from spirit, but instead can be seen as spirit manifesting in form. From this standpoint, one does not live, get points for being good, and then receive rewards later. There is no later. It is not a sequential process, as there are no “things” that are not also spirit. Materiality and spirit are enfolded in one another, perhaps as David Bohm (1980) saw them in describing the universe as “a coherent whole, which is never static or complete but which is an unending process of movement and

unfoldment” (p. x). This is similar to Chogyam Trungpa’s (1973) notion of authenticity in action. In this context, mindfulness or awareness intrinsically means connecting simultaneously with oneself as an embodied being and with the vastness and interconnected quality of life, developing a view of impermanence (as Buddhists call it) and the constructed nature of human societies.

While going through this experiment and working on this book, I often reflected on the difficulty of having leaders train extensively in meditation or mindfulness, given their time constraints and focus on action. In addition, over the centuries, it has been clear that even to develop wise spiritual leaders is a significant challenge, since they, like political leaders, are often caught by the attractions of power, wealth, and self-image. The action research process suggests one type of path forward. It is a path that connects with the work of Otto Scharmer and Peter Senge on presence. Instead of developing lengthy training processes, perhaps executive guides can support leaders in being fully present and paying attention, while reminding them of their already existing deep personal values and intentions.

Exploring Presence in Action: A Research Project

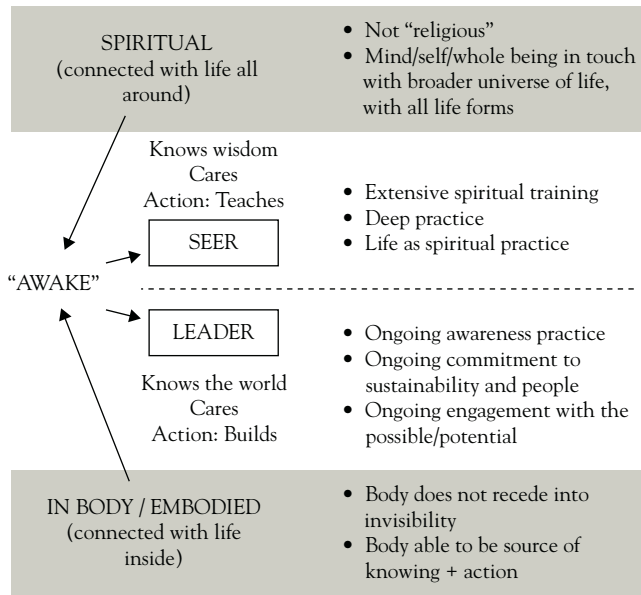
To explore this richness and complexity in a structured way, I co-created a collaborative action research project several years ago. We invited participants to observe themselves three to four times a week for four weeks during moments that they sensed themselves to be more awake than usual. The project coordinators did not tell participants anything about how they should hold the notion of awake, except for contextualizing it historically in relation to the words of several different spiritual traditions.

The basis of this research was my curiosity about whether human beings actually need to be trained to notice, pay

attention, and sense themselves and their environment. Instead, in this research project we opted to regard these as basic capacities that come with embodiment as human beings, so that people do not need to be “trained” in them. I am guessing that the vivid connectedness with experience that human babies and very young children share fades for most people as they learn to talk, drive, think, and write. Perhaps people simply need to be reminded to pay attention, rather than needing training in awareness or meditation. This led to the design of our research as an action research experiment.

A core notion in this research project was that as humans, we have not learned how to fully use all of our equipment: we haven’t yet mastered the fine art of living with the rich and complex body/mind/sensing apparatus (or self) that we are. Rather than assuming that what is needed is ever more training, I became interested in questioning whether simply paying attention might trigger a different way of approaching life and action. This is similar to what I perceive in the method of dialogue, where participants sit together patiently, allowing silence and time between people’s words rather than jumping in with preplanned notions of what should go next. Both approaches give space for something new to emerge from being present to one another.

In our research project, we invited participants to pay attention and be aware of moments when they felt “awake” or present and to write or record notes about the experiences. As this book goes to press, my colleagues and I are engaged in analyzing the transcripts of the individual reflections and interviews that comprise our qualitative data. We already see that the participants experienced unexpected insight and support for being present in daily action and felt that this affected how they worked during the rest of the day while they were involved in the experiment. Such individual first-person research can provide a foundation for designing larger change projects. (See Figure I.1 for the way I have modeled this, based on my research, consulting, experience with Buddhist practices, and reflection.)

Figure I.1 Embodied Leadership

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Rather than doing lengthy training, perhaps leadership development can increasingly incorporate ongoing practices of contemplation (of all types and traditions) to bring leaders in touch regularly with the fullness of life within them (embodiment) and on the planet (spirituality), along with supporting them in actively engaging with the complex systemic problems faced today in our economies and cultures. Such awareness can be enhanced by simple training in easily learned compassion practices (Salzberg, 2011). As Senge (2012) has said, “Until you can stop the habitual flow of your mind, you cannot see what’s around you. If you’re going to be in a position of authority, you’d better have a high level of awareness of what’s going on. Otherwise, all you can do is project your inner dynamics on the outer world. You look at our world today, and we’ve got a lot of people in positions of authority who don’t know anything except

how to project their own world-view on the larger world, so we have lots of problems” (pp. 326–327).

When executives sense that they are interconnected with all other sentient beings, they are likely to make different decisions than when they mainly sense pressure for quarterly results, as you will see in several chapters in this book. If CEOs are aware of their breath, their heart, and their feet on the ground and take time to gaze at the vast sky all around as they think about a difficult strategic issue, they may take different things into account in arriving at key decisions. Thus, I suspect that leaders do not need the depth of mindfulness training that has been provided throughout history for those who seek to become wisdom teachers; they need only brief training in awareness and compassion, combined with ongoing practice in being present to themselves, others, and life while working as managers, politicians, or military leaders. This might mean linking experiences in presencing and mindfulness with learning about adaptive leadership (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002).

A Glimpse inside the Creation of This Book

As with leadership, which seems to be an attribute of one person yet is something that occurs only in the midst of an interactive process, the creation of this book has been a team effort. Again, as with the boat, there is a key role for the designated leader, but the selection of the team members and the work of those behind the scenes are all critical components. The editorial team is composed of four people who have never met in person and come from very different backgrounds and experience bases; each graciously gave a great deal of their time to create a book that would make a distinctive contribution to people who care about leadership in today’s world.

We made time to talk over coffee virtually, to simply be together so we could speak from our heart-mind, not just from our

intellects, even though I was in California, John was on a Greek island and then in Maine, Karin was in the Netherlands, and Lena was in Spain and then in Sweden. We did this so we could express strongly divergent opinions without feeling uncomfortable doing so, as happens much of the time in meetings. We sorted through 120 submissions without having any idea who wrote them, whether they came from widely respected scholars and consultants or from people new to the field, from mature professionals or newly minted PhDs. We read and talked to find those authors who spoke to us from a sense of their own real experiences, who shared data (whether research based or from experience as manager or consultant) and built clear lines of thought that seemed likely to be of interest to the current and potential members of the ILA. They addressed the theme we sought: developing leaders who are present, bring spirit to their part of the world, and lead in ways that enable more authentic action. These are leaders whose spirit, presence, and authenticity help them move their organizations or communities toward improved action on what Ron Heifetz (Parks, 2005) has called “swamp problems”—those problems no one knows how to resolve.

I read all submissions, and each associate editor read a third of them. Then we shared our views in writing, discussed them, and chose twenty that all four of us would read in order to select those that would make up this book.

Living in San Francisco, I often get to watch the fog come floating in and curl around the brightly outlined blocks of buildings as the sun sets. Soft gray fog, shining hard windows reflecting golden light, and sharp edges of buildings standing out against the blur of smaller structures and the gradual enveloping fog, as the sky turns pink and gray—the brilliant blue of the day morphing into a softness and subtlety chilled by strong winds. It is as though the buildings and the city are being packed away in cotton clouds for the night. How do we select pieces that will paint vivid pictures for our readers? Which of the authors will be

able to take their submissions to new levels? It is never easy to know.

Our virtual meetings were among the richest I have ever experienced. We have come to know one another and appreciate both the similarities of what we value and the differences among us. I wish such meetings were common in all organizations, in all universities. When she comments, Lena Lid-Falkman brings warmth, experience editing previous BLB volumes, deep knowledge of the way that one exemplary leader (Dag Hammarskjöld) contributed to the global evolution of leadership, plus expertise in rhetoric and the ways that social media are impacting leadership studies. John Eric Baugher brings excellence in scholarly writing that is also personal and reflective, experience in Buddhist practice and research on end-of-life care, as well as extensive understanding of relevant sociological perspectives. Karin Jironet brings years of work experience as a Jungian analyst and executive guide, plus personal experience with Sufism and other wisdom lineages, enriched by having written a book on the feminine in leadership. All are excellent writers and editors who walk their talk of commitment to openness. I seek to bring understanding of interactive processes and a feeling for new possibilities that we are here to birth, honed by over twenty years of practice as an organizational and leadership consultant, decades of grounding in the fluidity and concreteness of the Feldenkrais approach to awareness through movement, and value for both shared silence and well-crafted words. I tried always to create virtual meetings in which we felt truly present with one another, so that our work was itself a manifestation of what we want the book to be in the world.

Finally, we also interacted virtually with Debra DeRuyver, who has managed the creation and evolution of the Building Leadership Bridges for the ILA since 2009. Her ability to be both friendly and highly organized through e-mail and by phone is a blessing in a project manager and contributed always to the

quality of the final product. The role of the ILA itself in selecting this theme, placing resources behind it, and sustaining this series is a sign of its intent to make a unique contribution to leadership in today's world.

Overview of the Book

The contributors to this book explored these and similar questions in their own ways. Each part approaches the theme from a different perspective. The associate editors introduce the contents of each part with a thought piece, so I will focus here on the thinking behind the overall structure of this book rather than on the individual chapters.

We don't see spirit, presence, and authenticity as three distinct things; we treat them as related and interdependent lenses through which to appreciate leadership. As an example of the pervading trinity, Buddhist traditions speak of three *kayas*, or different ways of understanding the relationship between spirit and phenomena. Briefly, the first of these could be thought of as the underlying principle of enlightenment—the source of all and everything, which we are here labeling *spirit*; the second is how this enlightenment connects with life through light, which we are here labeling *presence*; and the third is how it manifests in beings who take action, here labeled as *authenticity*. The parts don't follow one another in a linear way, but in a book, one thing must follow another.

My familiarity with these distinctions led me to sense spirit as a lens for something that is not concrete but influences everything else. Therefore, the book opens with part 1, "Spirit," with chapters that offer a frame of reference for renewal of notions of leadership, grounded in theory as well as in daily practice. Another way of describing this part would be to say it provides an expansive view of the nature and role of leadership today, which Karin Jironet explores in her contribution.