Leadership with inner meaning: A contingency theory of leadership based on the worldviews of five religions

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to create the foundation for a contingency theory of leadership based on the inner values and worldviews of five major religious traditions: Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism and Buddhism. The article identifies similarities and differences in the implicit leadership models among these five religious traditions. It further explores the implications of this model for organizational leadership in an increasingly uncertain and evolving global economy, where not only cultures but also religions, their belief systems and their values, are in increasing contact and interaction. We develop and describe a multiple-level ontological model of being to expand upon and enlarge the currently accepted behavior-based contingency theories of leadership. The article proposes and creates an integrative model of organizational leadership based on inner meaning, leader values, vision and moral examples at multiple levels of being as an extension to prior behavior-based contingency theories of organizational leadership.

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1. Introduction

When one examines the implied leadership models embedded in the scriptural texts and traditions of the world’s major religious traditions there is evidence for a meta-contingency theory of leadership. It is

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a meta-theory because it is derived from the leadership theories embedded in the traditions and writings of the three major Western religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) plus two major Eastern religions (Buddhism and Hinduism).

The derived theory, which this article explicates, incorporates both the external and internal environments of the organization or business unit as well as the internal environment of the leader. The resulting leadership behavior is theorized to depend upon: 1) on-going observation by the leader of subtle changes in his or her surrounding environment; 2) on-going real-time self-observation of the often subtle changes in the inner world of the leader (i.e., complex interactions among thoughts, feelings, intuitions, inspirations, and creative imagination); 3) an on-going aspiration to transcend the duality of “self” and “other” (to “self-actualize” in the terminology of Maslow); and 4) a deep wish to serve others to eliminate or decrease human suffering.

This article draws upon a diverse set of sources, mainly from the following religious traditions: Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism and Buddhism. Whether or not one is a believer in the efficacy of religious traditions generally or a practitioner of a specific tradition is immaterial to the need to understand the belief and aspiration systems that motivate leaders whose values and behaviors are guided and shaped by a spiritual or religious paradigm. For the present purposes “spirituality” will refer to the quest for self-transcendence and the attendant feeling of interconnectedness with all things in the universe. Whereas spirituality tends to be inherently personal, though it can also reside and be present in a group, a religion is an institution, which has formed and developed over time around the spiritual experiences of one or more founding individuals (Fry, 2003).

The intention of this article is to construct a contingency theory of leadership, which is based on the values and worldviews that are implicit in five of the world’s great religions. To accomplish this there are several salient aspects to the overall approach that we will briefly summarize. First, the theory treats these religions as five natural experiments in sense making and social action, which have evolved over the last 1400 to 4000 years, depending on the religious tradition. Second, the model is based on a multiple-level ontology consisting of five modes of being that are found to exist in the inner spiritual traditions of all five religions. The most inclusive level, labeled the “nondual” and explained in detail later in the article, contains the other four levels of being and is “holonic.” “A holon is a whole that is part of other wholes” (Wilber, 2000b, p. 7). 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. For an example of a holon-based model of organizational decision making with six levels see Kriger & Barnes (1992) or for an extended discussion of holonic systems see Wilber (1995, 2000a, 2000b).

Third, the model is built on the prior work of contingency leadership theorists, such as the multiple linkage model of Yukl (1981, 1989, 2002), and not only extends his behavior-based model to the value domain but also identifies a latent variable as the source of both the values and the situational variables. Fourth, the model is grounded in the behavior, values and worldviews of five religions using leadership examples and prior theorists, as well as terminology in the languages of the five religions (Hebrew, Latin, Arabic, Sanskrit and Pali). This terminology is then translated into a common underlying system of sense making that has been emerging in disciplines parallel to the organizational leadership field. Finally, for reasons of parsimony, two of the religions, Islam and Buddhism, are explored in greater depth, with the terminology of the other three religions referenced to these two.
1.1. Setting and objectives

There is a deep crisis in human affairs, which is occurring at numerous levels of human scale from the individual to the organizational to the societal. The symptoms are multiple and numerous. At the societal level we observe the continuing breakdown of social structures occurring not only in the Middle East, in Africa, in central Asia, parts of southeast Asia and in South America, but also in Western Europe and North America. Most people have no idea as to how to intervene in the complex of “breakdowns” that appear in the daily news. This is summed up rather succinctly by Sir John Templeton who asks the following question in the recent Forward to the Handbook of Positive Psychology: “Why is it we know so little about the human spirit?” (Snyder & Lopez, 2002, p. vii).

In organizations we observe a loss of meaning, purpose, and, ultimately, joy which people derive from their work. At the individual level one simply has to note the lack of enthusiasm with which most people go about their daily activities (The Dalai Lama & Cutler, 2003). Something clearly needs to change, but the pervasiveness and complexity of the transformation that is being called for appears nearly intractable.

The dynamics of the preceding are summarized in Capra (1997): “The more we study the major problems of our time, the more we come to realize that they cannot be understood in isolation. They are systemic problems, which means they are interconnected and interdependent” (p. 5). He goes on to note: “There are solutions to the major problems of our time, some of them even simple. But they require a radical shift in our perceptions, our thinking, our values...(However,) the recognition that a profound change of perception and thinking is needed, if we are to survive, has not yet reached most of our corporate leaders, either, or the administrators and professors or our large universities” (p. 6).

The central thesis of this article is that in each of the major religious traditions of the world there are indications of a common underlying multiple level ontology of spiritual leadership, which can be and is applied in organizational settings, though often unconsciously, to address the roots of the above-noted systemic challenges.

Initially we chose to focus on Judaism, Christianity and Islam, but then added Hinduism and Buddhism to establish greater generalizability via the inclusion of one Eastern non-theistic religion as well as one Eastern theistic religion. Our task would have been simpler if we had limited ourselves to the major western religions; however, we believe the resulting theoretical framework is substantially enhanced with the inclusion of Buddhism and Hinduism.

1.2. Leadership with inner meaning and contingency theories

Leadership is one of the most complex processes facing managers in organizations. There are over 10,000 books and articles on the topic (see Bass, 1990; Yukl, 2002 for summaries and discussions of the major works and Daft & Lengel (1998), Quinn (1996), and Kouzes & Posner (2002) for representative applied works that have spiritual underpinnings). The indications that the world’s religious traditions give concerning how individuals can deepen the practice of leadership in organizations is an under-discussed and under-researched topic.

Leadership is often a product of subtle, invisible feelings, thoughts and intuitions (Badaracco, 2002; Kriger & Malan, 1993). Action, visible behavior, is just the tip of the iceberg of effective leadership in organizations, public and private. This article will argue for an integrative contingency model of
leadership that is implied by the major religious traditions of Judaism (Cooper, 1997; Kung, 1992; Pava, 2003), Christianity (Kung, 1992; Smith, 1991), Islam (‘Arabi, 1975; Nasr, 2002a, 2002b; Schimmel, 1975; Smith, 1991), Hinduism (Lipner, 1994; Maharshi, 1994; Zaehner, 1966) and Buddhism (Dalai Lama & Goleman, 2003; Goldstein, 2002; Goldstein & Kornfield, 1987; Hanh, 1997).

The specific objectives of this article are:

1) To enlarge our theories and understanding of organizational leadership through an examination of the worldviews, values and core teachings from five of the world’s religious traditions, two of them in depth (see Table 1 for an overview of implicit leadership models from the viewpoint of each of the five religions);
2) To theorize how application of the underlying epistemologies and ontologies of the world’s religions can inform the practice of leadership in organizations.

Two of the religions, Islam and Buddhism, will be discussed in greater depth with the remaining three used to increase generalizability, but with discussions abbreviated due to space limitations.

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2. Research and theoretical issues

Researchers and theorists trained professionally in the western behavioral science traditions, such as behavioral psychology or industrial organization economics, may find themselves uncomfortable with the use of concepts such as “spirituality,” “God,” or the “transcendent” in a behavioral science journal — mainly because these terms are generally outside the lenses of their disciplines. This discomfort and skepticism, or even reactivity, is understandable given that normal science, for behavioral scientists, is generally based on observable behavior or on the artifacts of behavior. However, it is important to note that 72% of the world’s population, 4.6 billion people out of a total world population of 6.4 billion in 2004, are 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 were also a total of 149 million atheists and 784 million non-religious people (figures rounded) resulting in 82% 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 nonbelievers exists for employees in organizations, then we have grounds to believe that the topic of spiritual leadership is far more salient to organizational leadership research than is currently understood and acknowledged by organizational researchers. If behavioral scientists are to understand the overall determinants of effective leadership behavior in organizations, it is incumbent upon us as scientists to understand the beliefs, values, and paradigms that to varying degrees form the epistemological foundations and shape the cognitions, beliefs and behavior of more than 80% of the human population on the planet and not shrink from this task as a result of currently preferred theoretical lenses and research methods.

2.1. Definitions of key terms

Consistent with Giacalone & Jurkiewicz (2003) we shall initially define “workplace spirituality” as: “...a framework of organizational values evidenced in the culture that promotes employees’ experience of transcendence through the work process, facilitating their sense of being connected to others in a way that provides feelings of completeness and joy” (p. 13). However, we note that their definition does not take into account the complex depth and richness that the term actually connotes in the writings of the world’s major religious traditions. This is as a result of a general misunderstanding by organizational theorists of the level of salience of the role and modalities of “being,” as opposed to activities, that exist in spirituality generally, and more specifically in the area of spiritual leadership. For the present, being will be defined as the level of conscious existence. We shall return to the subject of being in greater depth later in the article.

3. The Islamic tradition and its worldview of leadership

“Whoever knows himself, knows God.”— Mohammed

The following section attempts to summarize fourteen centuries of Islamic writings, which are relevant to the task of understanding spiritual leadership models in today’s workplace. We have chosen to investigate and describe the Islamic worldview in greater depth than those of the other religions for
two reasons: 1) because it is a religion which has come to be highly misunderstood in the West due to the actions of a very small number of radical extremists relative to the 1.2 billion Muslims in the world; and 2) because Islamic philosophy has a highly evolved epistemology and ontology, which are cognate with constructs in the other four religions.

This greater depth will require us to cover salient aspects of both the beliefs and values of the Islamic religion as well as those of mystical Islam, Sufism. This is no easy undertaking to condense into a few pages; however, it will provide an ontological language for discussing parallel concepts in the other two Western religions, Christianity and Judaism, as well as Hinduism and Buddhism. Those who are members of the other religions will hopefully forgive us any transgressions of their belief systems; however, given the current misunderstanding of Islam in the non-Muslim world, it will serve an important integrative task in bridging understanding of leadership models and underlying worldviews across the three western religions and the two major eastern religions.

In the remainder of this section there are seven sub-sections which delineate: 1) the conceptual approaches to leadership in Islam; 2) the role of community in shaping leadership; 3) the concepts of monotheism and justice in relation to leadership; 4) leadership role models; 5) selected examples of leadership from mystical Islam; 6) the attributes of the “perfected leader,” the 99 Divine Names; and 7) a model of multiple levels of being in the Islamic worldview. (Note: readers may find that by reading these seven sections quickly, and then returning to read them more carefully, their understanding of the overall argument and proposed integrative view of spiritual leadership may be enhanced). The intent of the following seven sub-sections is two-fold: 1) to give the reader an understanding of the rich subtleties of meaning and behavior which are advocated for the enactment of effective leadership in Islam; and 2) a foundation for understanding the central role of justice, values and community in the Islamic worldview as regards leadership.

3.1. Concepts of leadership in Islam

The history of Islam includes empires spanning over a millennium and several continents, where Islamic societies have placed great emphasis on theories of leadership and personal development. Islam today continues to build on moral leadership as exemplified in the lives of its saints and prophets, which include non-Arab individuals who predate Islam from the Old and New Testaments. For Muslims, whether in Beirut or Boston, the Prophet Mohammed (d. 632) represents the Perfected Human, al-Rajal al-Kamil, the “Seal of the Prophets,” the exemplar who most closely embodies the role model of spiritual leadership and the Qualities of God, as revealed in the Qur’an. In Islam, the Word of God is said to be embodied in the Qur’an and does not take human form. Unlike Christ, Mohammed did not share the divinity of God but was the Messenger of God, who received the Qur’an in mystical revelations through the Archangel Gabriel. The example of Mohammed’s actions and sayings, in combination with explication of the Qur’an, form the basis for shari’ah, Islamic law. His actions and sayings are still emulated today as benchmarks of both spiritual and temporal leadership (Note: italics will be used throughout to identify Arabic, Latin, Hebrew, Sanskrit and Pali terminology).

Many of the characteristics of “spirituality in the workplace” – the building of community, concern for social justice within the organization and its vision, and equality of voice (Conger, 1994; Fry, 2005; Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003; Godz & Frager, 2003; Hicks, 2003; Mitroff, 2002; Mitroff & Denton, 1999; Moxley, 2000; Pfieffer, 2003) – are basic themes of Islam. The values of service, surrendering self, truth, charity, humility, forgiveness, compassion, thankfulness, love, courage, faith, kindness, patience,
and hope, in the workplace spirituality literature, (Fry, 2003; Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003; Kriger & Hanson, 1999), are to be found not only in the Qur’an, but also in popular Islamic wisdom literature, philosophical debates and the mystical guidance of esoteric Islam, Sufism.

Based on the example of Mohammed and his Companions, who became the first four successors, or caliphs, spirituality is an integral component of leadership in Islam. In Islam the role, and attendant responsibility, of leadership is not to be chased after as an ambition; rather, leadership is envisioned as arising from the authority of the community. A spiritually guided leader engages in what Kanungo & Mendonca (1994) call “socialized power” and is enjoined not to seek “personalized power”, where “socialized power is the use of power for the service of others” (Kanungo & Mendonca, 1994, p. 181).

3.2. The role of community in Islam

Muslims refer to believers collectively as al-Ummah, the Community. Both the sense and reality of community are strengthened by the Five Pillars of Islam, which are integral to religious practice and underscore the primary spiritual values of charity, unity and justice. The Five Pillars consist of: 1) the affirmation of the Oneness of God and that Mohammed is God’s Messenger; 2) prayer five times daily with a communal noon prayer on Friday; 3) acts of charity and the giving of alms to the poor; 4) fasting during the month of Ramadan; and 5) the performance of a pilgrimage to Mecca. These actions also underscore the belief that all creatures are created equal and that humanity must therefore strive for balance and harmony (Qur’an 11: 86; 49: 7–8).

The purpose of the aforementioned external practices is to make believers constantly aware of their faith, in all aspects of life including the workplace (Wilson, 1997, p. 115). The events of September 11, 2001 and their aftermath have forced many Muslims to reconsider conspicuous practices such as ritual prayer and the wearing of the hijab in the workplace, and in many cases to substitute less perceptible expressions of spiritual belief (Hicks, 2003, pp. 102–105).

3.3. Monotheism, morality and the role of justice in Islam

In tandem with the central importance of community is the simultaneous affirmation of the transcendent (the Oneness of God, tawhid) and the immanent (the visible universe). This is expressed in the essential monotheism of God at the same time as the belief in the individual responsibility that each Muslim has for his or her individual actions. This is, in essence, identical to the Judaic statement of belief in the Oneness of God as expressed in the sh’ma (“Hear, O Israel, the Lord Our G–d is One”) and the Christian testimony of God’s Oneness as stated in The Lord’s Prayer.

The intention is that this Unity is to be realized from moment to moment. For its realization it requires a balance between the needs of the individual and those of the community, the well being of the collective. Therefore, the values, actions and decisions of individual Muslims and the leaders chosen by their community are intended to enhance and further the common good (Qur’an, 4: 2; 6: 153; 7: 31; 8: 27; 9: 34) (Dion, 2002, p. 163). For Muslims, economic life is thus seen as a means to a spiritual end, where prosperity means the living of a virtuous life. As recommended by an 11th-century advisor to central Asian courts, “Make life your capital and goodness the profit thereof” (Dankoff, 1983, p. 47).

In its relationship with God, humanity is seen as the caretaker (khalifah) of God’s property. Since there is no original sin in Islam or in Judaism, which is a fundamental difference between these two faiths and Christianity, humanity is meant to prosper through use of the resources bestowed by God,
which provide both sustenance (survival and physical needs) and wealth. Although there is no inherent contradiction between economic prosperity and spirituality in Islam, prosperity is intended to be intimately connected with moral development and thus meant to benefit the community as a whole. An increase in wealth by an individual or a group must not harm others (Qur’an 2:30, 256; 7:54, 166; 12:40). (See Qur’an 17: 22–38 for a description of the Islamic code of duties that parallels the Jewish Decalogue, the Ten Commandments, in Exodus 20: 1–21).

It is important to point out that the caretaker role applies not only to managing resources (all forms of material resources), but also to human beings. According to Islam, leaders, as servant–caretakers, are part of the reciprocal relationship between the leader and the led. A twelfth-century Saljuk manual, The Sea of Precious Virtues, identifies this interdependency as a key characteristic of leadership: “You know well that a king is only a king because of his subjects... Know therefore that kingship depends upon the populace” (Meisami, 1991, p. 83). Individuals are therefore accountable for the leadership model they choose to follow, and leaders who prosper through their caretaker role are accountable in their daily lives for their treatment of all (Darke, 1960).

Justice (‘adl) is perceived as the primary link between the community and the leader. According to the leading scholar Fazlur Rahman, Islamic teachings differentiated themselves from other monotheists in that: “... in the Qur’anic teaching monotheism was organically linked to the idea of justice. Indeed, so intense is this idea of economic justice of the common [person] that its importance is not less than that of monotheism or One God and His worship.” (Sonn, 1999, p. 197) Rahman further argues that the concept is so closely embedded in Islam that the Qur’an (107:2–8) states: “... in the absence of seeking the general welfare of men, worship of God— even of one God— is not only meaningless but sheer hypocrisy.”

In a recent interview by one of the authors on the subject of leadership with Mohammed Tantawi, the Grand Sheikh of Islam, who is the head of al-Azhar Mosque in Cairo and spiritually represents one billion Sunni Muslims, Sheikh Tantawi identified the urgent need to increase the manifestation in behavior of the qualities of justice and mercy among many current leaders in the world, including those in Islam (Seng, 2003, p. 59). Parenthetically, 87% of all Muslims are Sunni (Nasr, 2002a, 2002b, p. 65).

In the 7th century, Imam ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib (d. 661), the source of Shi’ite Islam, best summarized the power and the importance of the role model of leaders when he said: “With respect to their morals, people resemble their rulers more than they resemble their fathers” (Al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 17, p. 129). The importance of the leadership role model in Islam is therefore critical to the welfare of both the individual and the community, whether a government, a large corporation, or small business.

Kanungo & Mendonca (1994) emphasize that moral caliber “is largely determined by the people in leadership positions. The way leaders function in their positions of influence directly contributes to strengthening or weakening the moral fiber of a society” (p. 164). Since Islam requires a balance between individual influence and social obligations, as well as a balance between material and spiritual needs, the ideal person to lead is perceived to be the most virtuous, and not the wealthiest or most powerful (Dion, 2002, p. 161).

3.4. Leadership role models in Sufism

Through the Qur’an, and the role model of the Prophet Mohammed, Islam contains numerous examples for understanding spiritual leadership in the workplace. However, Sufism, the mystical dimension of Islam, provides even more extensive examples. According to Sufism, a spiritual person is a
reflection of the Divine, just as a leader, or ruler, provides a role model to be emulated by those who are lead. The actions of a leader are then to be repeated, until internalized by the other individuals in the community.

According to the 13th-century sociologist, Ibn Khaldun, work, or craft, is a metaphor for personal growth in both one’s social roles and technical skills. Moral religious behavior in then evidenced in worldly activity, inner attitudes and virtue (Rosenthal, 1981). A person’s soul is thus seen as being shaped by his or her activities. Moral and spiritual qualities are based on “habit” or malaka, through which outer action is believed to transform the soul. The Arabic word malaka needs some elaboration. In meaning it closely resembles the Latin, habitus, an acquired faculty rooted in the soul. For Ibn Khaldun, faith, as with any habitus, “rises from actions, is perfected by action and governs all actions” (Lapidus, 1984, p. 55). Thus, spirituality is attained as with any craft, through action.

In Islam the concepts of spirituality and adab (a term meaning both “advice” and those who adhere to it, an “adept”) are intimately linked. Spirituality here is defined as: “... the cultivation of the totality of the soul in all of its inner traits and outer expressions. It is the malaka of the whole man, the culmination, the completion of a Muslim adab” (Lapidus, 1984, p. 57).

Like the Qur’an, which in Arabic means the Recitation, the wisdom literature on adab is intended for use in moral instruction. However, unlike the Qur’an, which is perceived to be the unalterable Word of God, adab reflects local traditions, which are contingent upon the appropriateness of the context and situation. Moreover, as popular wisdom literature, adab has for centuries provided advice for both the spiritual and temporal development of individuals ranging from grand viziers to housewives and from guild masters to spiritual initiates. This literature culturally performs the same role as the advice literature found today in many bookstores, where the content advises individuals on how to be “spiritual” in the workplace, a literature which, some believe, is creating a “commodification of spirituality” (Hicks, 2003, pp. 38–39).

A subset of this wisdom literature, called the “mirrors for princes,” provides guidance for potential rulers. The leadership models in these works are neither authoritarian nor a source of patrimonial authority (Swatos, 1995). Instead, the ideal leader is seen to combine simultaneously both spiritual and pragmatic dimensions. Far from being static, these works reveal the Islamic fascination with theories of the person and psychology and the concept that ethical norms are defined as the “development of personal character” (Metcalf, 1984, p. 4). These diverse writings instruct leaders that human life is multivalent, and that the dialectic of being includes recognition not only of self and other, but also of inner and outer worlds. At the center of these guides is a deep admonition to serve the community and to eliminate human suffering. As emphasized above by Ibn Khaldun, this popular instruction also points to one of the core values of Islam, that moral character is the fruit of contemplation and training.

Since the beginning of Islam its founding leaders have struggled with the relation between the physical (the immanent, khalq) and the spiritual Self (the Transcendent, al-Haqq). Wisdom (hakim), is seen as differing from intellect (’aql). It is both a means and a terminus for a well-lived life. Wisdom, according to the great philosopher–mystic Abu Hamid al-Ghazzali (d. 1111), involves the integration of deeds, knowledge and virtues. The heart, as a psycho-spiritual organ of perception, not the intellect or brain, is believed to be the faculty of knowledge. The role of the heart is both to acquire knowledge, and then through experience, to acquire wisdom (Corbin, 1969). In a leader, wisdom manifests itself in such virtues as administrative ability, mindfulness, clarity of vision and shrewdness (Umaruddin, 1988, p. 139). According to Islam wisdom is gathered in the heart as a cognitive organ, enabling an individual to worship and to love more deeply.
3.5. Concepts of leadership from mystical Islam

In advancing the concept of perfection of the soul as a requisite of leadership, al-Ghazzali, like Ibn Khaldun, used the metaphor of craft. Most important in the development of craft is the acquisition of traits or attributes of the heart. He believed that: “... each act, each thought, each deed impressed itself as an image (mithal) upon the heart, or in other terms, becomes an attribute (sifā), a quality of the heart” (Lapidus, 1984, p. 47). These attributes, once rooted in the heart, eventually govern one’s behavior. Wisdom is, therefore, the outcome of actions through which one has attained knowledge.

Al-Ghazzali considered what Islamic philosophers called “the science of character” to be more important than the science of religion, that is, that character is more important than belief. He refined his view using Sufi terminology with terms such as: “the science of states of the heart” (‘ilm ahwal al-qalb) and the “science of conduct” (‘ilm al-mu’alama) (Bagley, 1964). He understood the latter to be the study of the right virtues that underlie the acts prescribed by shariah or religious law (Hourani, 1985, p. 136). The four cardinal virtues according to al-Ghazzali are wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice, with justice acting also as the power which directs these elements to achieve the golden mean and to preserve their harmony (Umaruddin, 1988, p. 144).

Ibn ’Arabi (d. 1240), sometimes referred to as “the Supreme Master” or “the greatest Sheikh” (ash-Sheikh al-Akbar), wrote a study of 27 prophet–leaders who are mentioned in the Qur’an (’Arabi, 1975). These prophets are viewed as prototypes of differing types of spiritual leadership, which are still in use today. They include the patriarchs and prophets of the Old and New Testament (that is, Christ) and end with Mohammed, known as the “Seal of the Prophets.” Presented in symbolic form in the Fusus al Hikam, also known as the Bezels of Wisdom (’Arabi, 1975), these prophets correspond to leadership templates that offer guidelines for being a leader in everyday life.

For example, the Prophet David represents the wisdom of “being”; Solomon, the wisdom of “compassion”; John, the wisdom of “majesty”; Jesus, the wisdom of “prophecy” and Mohammed symbolizes the wisdom of “singularity” the Oneness of Being. Finally, Aaron is the prototype of the wisdom of “leadership,” a characteristic which is identified as intimately linked to mercy (rahma). Each of the preceding prophets represents one or more of the 99 Attributes or Divine Names of God, which are discussed in greater depth below. However, each of these 27 prototypes has many subtle aspects that go far beyond simple traits or styles and include complex instructions for the realization of inner states of awareness and levels of being.

In his discussion of leadership in Being and the Perfect Man, Ibn ’Arabi identifies two overall types of relationships (For elaborations and discussions of the characteristics of the Insan al-Kamil or “perfected leader,” see ’Affifi, 1939; Izutsu, 1967; and Kriger, 1975). The first, termed the “subjection of will,” is a master–slave relationship, similar to authoritarian leadership, while the second, “subjection of circumstance” is similar to a king responding to and serving the needs of his subjects. Ibn ’Arabi writes that while some leaders practice subjection by rank for their own ends, others realize the truth of the matter and know that by rank they are subject to the needs of and, hence, in the service of their own subjects, because the subjects bestow upon them the power and the right to lead (Austin, 1980, p. 246). In today’s organizational leadership literature the concept of “subjection of circumstance” is thus similar to the concept of situation-based “servant leadership” (Greenleaf, 1977, 1998), however, written about, rather presciently, over 800 years ago!
3.6. The 99 attributes of the perfected leader

In the Islamic worldview the soul is believed to find lasting satisfaction only in the constant remembrance of God. A leader is meant to prefer “remembrance” to all other goals or states. The remembrance of God (dhikr), as practiced by Sufis, involves embodying in daily life the 99 Beautiful Attributes of God (al-'Asma al-Husna) (Al-Jerrahi al-Halveti, 2000). According to several Islamic scholars of leadership: “From a traditional Islamic perspective, being a good leader means following divine guidance and developing noble traits in the self through the emulation of divine qualities.” (Said, Sachs, & Sharify-Funk, 2004, p. 1) We can observe these qualities in exoteric cultural models as discussed above; however, it is the esoteric tradition “of cultivating and emulating divine qualities in the self (takhalluq bi-akhlaq allah) that forms the core of Islamic teachings on leadership as a form of service to God and the community.”

The concept of the 99 Names of God draws from a saying (Hadith) by al-Bukhari, “Allah has ninety-nine Names, one hundred less one: This, in turn, refers to a passage of the Qur’an: “He is Allah, and there is no God beside Him, the Knower of the unseen and the seen. He is the Gracious, the Merciful. . . .His are the most Beautiful Names.” (Qur’an: 59:23–25) According to Said et al. (2004), when the 99 Beautiful Names are invoked in the name of a person, “that person is often called the servant of the quality; hence, the name Abd al-Rahman (Servant of the Compassionate) and not just Rahman. A person who excels in the service of a divine quality is considered to be a true leader of the people.” (p. 2).

Elaborating on the role of the 99 Names, Said et al. (2004) point out that there is a duality to leadership in the Islamic view: first, as a servant (’abd) to God and to the people, and second, as a representative of leadership qualities and of the people. Thus, a leader is continually balancing pairs of apparent opposites, such as the qualities of majesty and beauty, right action and appropriate intention, justice and mercy.

3.7. Multiple levels of being in the Islamic view

A brief excursion into the multiple levels of being in Islam is needed here (see Table 2, columns 1 and 2). Within classical Sufism there are five modes or levels of being that are identified and described. The first level of being is hadrat al-Dhat, the plane of the Essence, in which there is a Transcendent Oneness, which has no qualification. This is the Godhead of Absolute Oneness, or the level of being which transcends all dualities and Names. It is sometimes also called al-Ahadiya (the One, which is beyond all Attributes and Names) (’Affifi, 1939). In the Jewish Cabbala this is En-Sof, the First Cause (Kaufmann & Ginsburg, 2004). Level 1, in Table 2, is thus the integration of all of the Divine Names or Attributes into an Absolute Oneness which is beyond all distinctions, including the distinction between Divine transcendence and worldly immanence (see ’Arabi, 1975, pp. 32–34 for a detailed discussion of this philosophically complex but important topic).

The second level of being is the Plane of Attributes and Names (hadrat al-Sifat wa’l-Asma), which Ibn ’Arabi also calls the world of Spirit (alam ta’aayyunat Ruhiya). This is the level of being where “Spirit” is said to reside. The third level of being is the Plane of Divine Acts (hadrat al-Af’al), also called the world of the souls (alam ta’aayyunat nafsiya). This is the level where the “soul” is said to reside. The fourth level of being is the Plane of the Images and Active Imagination (hadrat al-Mithal wa’l-Khayal) or the world of images and imagination (alam al-mithal) (’Affifi, 1939; Izutsu, 1967).
The final and fifth level of being is the plane of the sensible and visible (hadrat al-Hiss wa’l-Mushahada). This is the physical, observable world, as we know it through the five senses. The first four levels of being represent ontological modes of the Absolute in its self-manifestation and unfolding from Oneness (tajalli). These levels of being constitute among themselves an organic whole where the things of a lower plane of being serve as images for things on the planes above. Thus, each of the five levels or modes of being is a holon as defined earlier.

Underlying the preceding is a central theme: according to Islam, the goal of this world is to know the Absolute, which is not directly knowable on Level 1, but through His Attributes, the 99 Divine Names (Level 2). For Muslims, spiritual knowledge is obtained through an active engagement in practical worldly affairs (level 5), in which the physical world is a reflection of that which resides on progressively higher levels of being. Central to this belief is the idea that each person, although part of a larger community, is individually responsible for his or her own actions. Hence, such persons are leaders in their own lives and to those around them in numerous unseen and humble ways in life’s journey to realization of the Divine.

4. The Buddhist tradition and its worldview of leadership

Central to the teachings of Buddhism is the idea that the personal self or “I” is fundamentally empty of reality and created as a thought in the mind out of delusional thinking and habits. The
notion of “no self” (anatta) has been recorded in the Abidharma, a collection of writings over 1100 pages in length set down in the 4th century B.C. that describes technical instructions for meditation and describes in detail the inner states that a person is likely to encounter if pursuit of “no self” is sought through meditative practice (see also Nanasampanno, 2003). The concept is also prominent throughout the writings of the Tibetan and Zen Buddhist traditions (for extended description and elaboration of “no self” see the writings of Dogen (d. 1253), the founder of Soto Zen in Japan (Dogen, 1975), on through the works of Suzuki Roshi (Suzuki, 1970), Yamada Roshi (Yamada, 1979), and Daido Loori Roshi (Loori, 2002). Over the past 2600 years since the time of the Buddha, millions of individuals have engaged in deep practice of inner investigation, observation, contemplation and meditation seeking to disengage from the experience of and belief in the self-subsistence of an individual self.

Our exploration of leadership from a Buddhist perspective will build on the following concepts from Buddhist philosophy: 1) impermanence (anicca); 2) selflessness (anatta); 3) the effects of the “comparing” or discursive mind; and 4) development of the four positive states of mind (Brahmaviharas).

4.1. Impermanence, suffering and “no self”

In the West, the personal self or “I” is held as central in most psychological theories of identity and personality. “From Freud’s early identification of the individual ego to more recent conceptualizations of social identity groups, the concepts of a distinctive “self” and “self-identity” have been central to Western psychological thought” (Gray, in press). According to Burke (1969, p. 21), identity refers to “uniqueness as an entity in itself and by itself, a demarcated unity having its own particular structure.” In western psychology much effort is spent trying to discover ways to develop the “self” and “to make it whole” or, at a minimum, to free it from neuroses and dysfunctional states. See the extensive writings of Freud, Jung, and Adler in order to understand the centrality of the concept of “self” in western clinical psychology (Gray & Kriger, 2005).

This difference in the treatment of personal self by Buddhist philosophy and western psychology has extended implications for theories of organizational leadership. In western psychology the leader is found to exercise his or her talents, skills, and competencies, on behalf of the group, organization, or society, contingent upon their perception of the situation and resultant dependencies, in order to lead effectively within the changing work environments (Yukl, 2002). “For example, leaders have been described as ‘managers of meaning’ (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Pfeffer, 1981; Smircich & Morgan, 1982), who make sense of organizational activities so that employees can find a place for themselves within the organization (Ibarra, 1999; Gray & Kriger, 2005, p. 21).

The leader, in the Buddhist paradigm, thinks, feels, senses and observes the changing aspects of the world and the inner contents of the mind along with feelings and sensations; however, there is no “self” that is directing the experiencing of the world. For Buddhists, the ego, and its attendant desires, are posited to be the fundamental causes of unhappiness. In this view attempts to satisfy the desires of the ego only lead eventually to emotional suffering. In place of these the Buddha advocated selflessness, or “no self” (anatta). This is not the denial of the “self”, but rather the absence of essential distinctions between ourselves and everyone else. In this view everyone and everything in the world is intimately interconnected in a set of endless causal networks.
The concept of “no self” as one of the central teachings of the Buddhism is one of the most difficult aspects of the Buddhist worldview for most westerners to accept and to understand. We posit that the reasons are several-fold: 1) the concept is alien to the western psychological paradigm; 2) without a direct experiencing of anatta the concept appears to be the product of the imagination; and 3) the mind usually begins to ask, “If there is no ‘self’ at the root of experience and actions, then who or what is aware of thoughts, feelings and sense perceptions?” (See Gray & Kriger (2005) for an earlier articulation of these ideas). Despite these difficulties, consideration of “no self” offers some important implications for a multiple-level of being model of effective leadership based on inner meaning and values.

Our challenge, in this section, is two-fold: first, to understand how leadership theory, and leaders, can bridge these two seemingly incommensurable paradigms of Buddhist and western psychology; and second, to understand the implications of such an integration for the creation of a more comprehensive theory of effective leadership in organizations.

Apropos to this, Huston Smith, one of the most widely read writers on comparative religion in the 20th century, states:

Original Buddhism can be characterized in the following terms: 1. It was empirical. Never has a religion presented its case with such unequivocal appeal to direct validation. .2. It was scientific. It made the quality of lived experience its final test, and directed its attention to discovering cause-and-effect relationships...3. It was pragmatic...4. It was therapeutic...5. It was psychological. 6. It was egalitarian. With a breadth of view unparalleled in his age and infrequent in any, he (the Buddha) insisted that women were as capable of enlightenment as men...7. It was directed to individuals. (Smith, 1991: 97-8)

In the Buddha’s empirical investigation of the nature of “self,” he reported three findings: 1) that all created phenomena are by their nature arising and passing away, hence, impermanent (anicca); 2) that it is not possible to find happiness in life, except for limited periods of time, because suffering (dukkha) and death are unavoidable aspects of living; and 3) that the “self” upon close examination is empty of real existence (anatta). (Note: In Islam anicca is equivalent to the Arabic terms, fana and baqa, respectively “passing away” and “resurrection.”)

4.2. The bodhisattva leadership model: leading without a leader

In Buddhism there are said to be five hindrances to becoming a balanced and aware individual, whether as a leader or follower. These are: 1) attachment to sense pleasure; 2) aversion to people, objects and inner states; 3) sloth and torpor (laziness in the body and mind); 4) restlessness, in behavior and the mind; and 5) doubt that events are going to be realized as planned or according to intentions and wishes. These hindrances, when operating, prevent leaders, as well as other members of organizations, from being objective, i.e., from perceiving situations accurately.

There are also found to be seven factors of enlightenment, which are identified as: 1) mindfulness; 2) effort and energy; 3) investigation; 4) interest; 5) concentration; 6) tranquility; and 7) equanimity (Goldstein & Kornfield, 1987). Each of these factors are qualities of mind that when cultivated in daily life are found to affect profoundly an individual’s relationship to the world around them. When present or developed they increase the ability of individuals to be more empathic, more present in their activities, more energized at work and more satisfied (Goldstein & Kornfield, 1987) and, hence,
to be effective in a wide range of work roles, especially leadership roles. The five hindrances, when they are absent or attenuated, cease to result in negative emotional and mental states such as boredom and lack of clarity. When operating they decrease the effectiveness of the individual in the workplace, and more generally in life.

4.3. The effects of the comparing mind

The term “comparing mind” refers to the cognitive tendency to see differences and distinctions and, as a result, to make excessive comparisons and judgments about who is superior and inferior in relationships and who is better. This tendency is pervasive in most organizations, particularly as regards competition with others, for example, for a superior’s favor, for choice assignments, promotions and increases in rewards. Perceiving through the worldview of “no self” requires one to do away with such distinctions. It also leads to the radical idea that there are no essential inherent distinctions between leaders and followers (Gray & Kriger, 2005).

Since leaders are often selected precisely because they excel or stand out in some way from others in the organization, the lack of distinctions between leaders and followers is hard for westerners, who have not practiced Buddhist meditation, to visualize. In the organizational leadership literature, the closest parallel is the concept of “distributed or multiple leadership” (Gronn, 2002). For example, elimination of focusing on differences and distinctions implies that we begin to perceive ourselves as essentially similar to, rather than distinct, from others. It also does away with the taking of credit for leadership behavior and replaces it with a vision of seamless and selfless contributions by organizational members to the group or larger institutional entity. As Gronn (2002) states: “...multiple leadership allows the possibility that all organization members may be leaders at some stage” (p. 429). In such a conceptualization of leadership selflessness tends to replace selfishness, a behavioral norm which is consistent with the Buddhist concept of “no self” (Gray & Kriger, 2005). Gray & Kriger (2005) further note that this norm is a virtue that individual leaders need to cultivate themselves, not a particularly easy task given our tendency in the West to perceive leaders as charismatic or possessing magical competencies (Bass, 1988; Bass & Stedlmieier, 1999; Conger, 1989; Conger & Kanungo, 1998; House, 1977) and even messianic (Bion, 1961).

4.4. Leadership and the four positive states of mind (Brahmaviharas)

An examination of the Buddhist worldview as it informs leadership theory and practice would be incomplete without a discussion of what are called the “four immeasurable states of mind” (Brahmaviharas). The four states, or Brahмaviharas, are love, compassion, joy and equanimity.

During the lifetime of the Buddha, those of the Brahmanic (Hindu) faith prayed that after death they would go to Heaven to dwell eternally with Brahma, the universal God. One day a Brahman man asked the Buddha, “What can I do to be sure that I will be with Brahma after I die?” and the Buddha replied, “As Brahma is the source of Love, to dwell with him you must practice the Brahмaviharas — love, compassion, joy and equanimity.” (Hanh, 1997, p. 1)

Although Buddhism is a non-theistic religion, the Buddha adapted the language of his advice to the experience and mindset of those he conversed with, adopting “skillful means” to convey his message. The result is an intimate connection between spiritual terms in the two languages. In Sanskrit a vihara
is a dwelling place or abode. Love, in Sanskrit, is *maitri*; in Pali it is *metta*, often translated into English more precisely as loving-kindness. Compassion is *karuna* in both languages. Joy is *mudita*. Equanimity is *upeksha* in Sanskrit and *upekkha* in Pali. The *Brahmaviharas* are, thus, the four elements of true love, which are deemed “immeasurable” because they are said to grow in strength daily if one practices them, and that eventually they will come to encompass a person’s entire being as well as the being of those around them. It is believed that everyone will become happier and more peaceful in the presence of those who cultivate these states of mind.


Essentially in Buddhism, a leader can be effective only if he or she not only practices but also embodies the *viharas* as appropriate to the situation from moment-to-moment in everyday life. Here we see a truly dynamic, moment-by-moment, contingency theory of leadership based on the ongoing inner spiritual practice of love, compassion, heart-felt joy and equanimity (inner and outer balance) in everyday life. Such a contingency theory of leadership, we argue, is more encompassing in its reach than prior contingency theories, which are based solely on outer behavior.

An illustration of nondual leadership in Buddhism (Level 1), is graphically described in one of the sutra of the Buddha where he describes the qualities of a *bodhisattva*, an individual who intentionally forgoes *nirvana* (final enlightenment) out of compassion for all sentient beings:

> During the short eons of swords,  
> They meditate on love,  
> Introducing to nonviolence

> In the middle of great battles  
> They remain impartial to both sides,  
> For *bodhisattvas* of great strength

> In order to help all living beings,  
> They voluntarily descend into  
> The hells (negative states) which are attached

—*Vimalakirti Sutra*

A similar expression of Level 1 nondual leadership is to be found in the Christian tradition: “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 nondual behavior 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).
5. Leadership theory revisited from a religious/spiritual viewpoint

5.1. Initial observations

Upon initial examination the organizational leadership model that seems to fit best the Hindu, Buddhist, Islamic, Christian and Judaic worldviews is closest to the current charismatic leadership theories. Just listening to the names of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph in the Patriarch Period (2166–1845 BC) and Saul, David and Solomon in the United Kingdom Period (1050–930 BC), Jesus, Mohammed, Krishna and the Buddha, respectively in Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism, evokes images of strong and effective heroic leader role models who possessed considerable charisma, at least as they come down to us in the historical documents of the Torah, the New Testament, Quran, Bhagavad Gita and Pali Canon.

Abraham, as the common father of both Isaac and Ishmael, and thus at the genealogical root of both the Judeo-Christian and Islamic lineages, embodied the elements of faith, courage, compassion, integrity, justice, and wisdom (Manz, Manz, Marx, & Neck, 2001). His family and tribe then trekked extensively for decades through Mesopotamia (now Iraq), the Sinai Desert of Egypt, Syria and Palestine. Jesus spent most of his brief 33 years preaching, healing and gathering others into an informal community, as well teaching others through parables and miracles, as reported in the New Testament. Mohammed, after receiving the Qur'an (reportedly as a direct message from Allah, according to the Moslem faith), spread the message that was received by communities throughout the Arabian Peninsula and beyond. There are, in addition, numerous heroic leader figures who have appeared in Islam, such as Abu Bakr (d. 634), ‘Ali (d. 661) and Umar II (d. 720), to name just a few (Nasr, 2002a, 2002b; Renard, 1993; Schimmel, 1975). The Buddha, after renouncing his royal heritage, wandered about first seeking enlightened realization and then teaching all who were willing to listen to his message on how to achieve inner peace and happiness. One commonality in the preceding is that all of these leader/founders spread their messages to their followers initially orally.

A striking similarity for all of these founder–leaders is that their oral messages were not written down by them but by others, often decades or hundreds of years later, yet their messages significantly infused the value structures and behavior of billions of people for 1400 to over 3000 years, depending upon the tradition. Certainly on the face of it this is substantial evidence for the presence of charismatic leadership at work.

5.2. The relevance of charismatic theories to spiritual leadership

“Charisma is a Greek word that means “divinely inspired gift,” such as the ability to perform miracles or predict future events” (Yukl, 2002, p. 241). According to Weber (1947) charisma is based on follower perceptions that the leader is endowed with exceptional or rare qualities. In addition, charisma is asserted by Weber to arise in response to social crisis where the leader usually emerges with a compelling, often radical, vision that provides a solution to the crisis facing the group, organization or societal unit.

Charismatic leaders often find it necessary to create new organizations or social units because their vision is radically different from predecessors (Yukl, 2002). According to Yukl (2002):

Leader traits and behaviors are key determinants of charismatic leadership... The leadership behaviors that explain how a charismatic leader influences the attitudes and behavior of followers
include the following: (1) articulating an appealing vision, (2) using strong, expressive forms of communication when articulating the vision, (3) taking personal risks and making self-sacrifices to attain the vision, (4) communicating high expectations, (5) expressing confidence in followers, (6) role modeling of behaviors consistent with the vision, (7) managing follower impressions of the leader, (8) building identification with the group or organization, and (9) empowering followers. (p. 244)

Certainly the biographies of Abraham, Moses, Solomon, Jesus, Mohammed, and the Buddha as they have come down to us all provide compelling examples of charismatic leadership. But, as we shall see, this is only the surface of the implicit theories of leadership at work in these religious traditions.

5.3. Differing ontological types — “being”, “doing” and “having”

One of the major challenges, which many organizational leaders face today, is the enactment of leadership with deep inner meaning for both themselves and others. This is related to the ontological level 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, which are familiar experientially to people in organizational settings; however, the direct experience and understanding of “being” has atrophied in the western world today due largely to an overemphasis on “observables.” Essentially, if something is not directly observable or measurable we, as behavioral scientists tend to question or deny its ontological status. However, we still call ourselves in English human beings — not human doings or human havings.

This seems to be an almost trivial observation; however, when one closely examines the extant organizational leadership theories it is clear that most western organizational leadership theories are based 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, 2002, chapter 8 for an excellent overview).

When we turn to the world’s religious traditions a similar three-fold ontological challenge occurs. In Islam there is: a. the sharia (the law); b. tariqah (the Way); and c. haqiqat (the Truth). In Buddhism the correlates are: a. the moral code (cila); b. the Path including the spiritual community (sangha), and c. the dharma (Truth). In Judaism the correlates are: a. the Rabbinic interpretation of the Torah resulting in religious law; b. the mystical path to God (kabbalah); and c. the One G–d (Hashem). According to Jewish theologians G–d cannot be named because It is beyond all names. Hence, G–d, in Hebrew, is often referred to as Hashem, or as Yahweh. But these are not names per se, but simply pointers to the One Being, which is claimed to be beyond naming and all names. In the Jewish tradition one is prohibited from writing the Name of God; hence, in English the use of “G–d” instead of “God.”

When we move from leadership based on having and doing to leadership that rests on and evolves out of being it is difficult to understand what such leadership conceptually consists of, because Pure Being is epistemologically beyond concepts per se and as se (‘Affifi, 1939). 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 its inspiration from and directing individuals in the community towards (Pava, 2003). It is the same for Islam and Buddhism. For Christians the ontological status of Jesus, as God
incarnate, results in an essential co-extensiveness between God as Spirit with the God as Father and the Son, but a detailed discussion of this is beyond the scope and aim of this article.

Traits, competencies and behaviors according to a spiritual worldview, become visible through the manifestations of varying levels of being, which is ontologically prior to the visible world (Wilber, 1996, 2000a, 2000b). According to Judaism human beings draw their being-ness from G–d, the ultimate source of meaning. For example, the three ontological types are visible in the forms of prayer: one can pray for wealth, health, or someone to love (having); one can pray that something will be done (doing); or one can pray without an object or action intended, to be simply in deep inner connection with the One Being or an aspect of the One Being such as love, truth, peace or compassion.

5.4. Leadership with inner meaning

Turning to leadership with inner meaning in the various religious traditions, it is important to keep these preceding three ontological types in mind. Numerous books on spiritual leadership have begun to be written where the lives of various Biblical prophets are portrayed as role models for leadership behavior in current organizational life. However, almost without exception these works emphasize the first two ontological types, having and doing, and rarely allude to or build upon the essential third type, being.

5.4.1. Leadership with inner meaning in Judaism

“Unless man is more than man, he is less than man.” Abraham Heschel

One recent exception to the claim in the preceding section is Pava (2003) who argues for what he calls covenantal leadership. He states:

A covenant is a voluntary agreement among independent but equal agents to create a “shared community.” The primary purpose of the agreement is to consciously provide a stable social location for the interpretation of life’s meanings in order to help foster human growth, development, and the satisfaction of legitimate human needs. (p. 2)

Covenantal leadership is based on a number of different paths. These include: 1. the path of humanity, which tends to produce organizations that can be trusted; 2. the path of no illusions, which emphasizes the centrality of pragmatism; 3. the path of moral imagination which, together with the path of integration, produces value; 4. the path of the role model which moves away from the heroic-leader towards a multiple-leader paradigm promoting human equality (see Gronn, 2002); and 5. the path of moral growth, which provides hope (Pava, 2003). All of these paths are to be aspired to and lived within the Judaic tradition, though one can certainly find numerous examples, both in organizations and in social institutions, where these ideals are not practiced as espoused according to the ideal. Nonetheless, they provide important underpinnings for understanding how to embody and promote “good,” not just “effective,” leadership in all social spheres.

Smith (1991) states:

If the key to the achievement of the Jews lies neither in their antiquity nor in the proportions of their land and history, where does it lie? This is one of the greatest puzzles of history, and a number of answers have been proposed. The lead that we shall follow is this: What lifted the Jews from obscurity to permanent religious greatness was their passion for meaning. (p. 273)
Manz et al. (2001) have written a collection of essays to describe some of the virtues for leadership, which is relevant for modern business, as well as ways of living with integrity, which emanate from the Jewish tradition. They relate the biblical stories of Job, David, Ruth, Moses and Solomon to portray the respective virtues of faith, courage, compassion, integrity and wisdom. Their work emphasizes the importance of discovering meaning within adversity and illustrates how modern business leaders can practice the ancient teachings of the Hebrews in everyday organizational life.

All five traditions provide role models and indications for the discovery of meaning, how to be and to lead in a world where most organizational members are seeking ways to live true to their inner individual values. This inner challenge is often undertaken within a larger set of organizational values that may be at odds with any particular individual’s values and beliefs. From the early prophets of Abraham, Isaac, and Joseph on through Moses to the Rabbis of today the search for meaning has distinguished the Jewish people during numerous periods of extreme difficulty, including several periods of near extinction. Fundamentally, the Jewish quest for meaning is rooted in their understanding of a transcendent God that infuses the individual with a sense of overall meaning, integrity and wholeness. This is echoed in the *sh’mah*, the testimony and call to Oneness: “Here, O Israel, the Lord Our God is One.” It should be noted that, in essence, this is the same as the statement of Oneness (*shahadah*) in Islam, “There is no God — but God.”

It should also be noted that similar to Judaism, in Christianity and in Islam, as well as in Hinduism and Buddhism, both inner intent and meaning are central to the long-term enactment of virtues in all phases of leadership. In actual fact all of these religions have in differing periods in history deviated from the espoused ideals, which is a major factor underlying the currently observed crisis in leadership in many areas of the world.

6. An expanded contingency theory of leadership

As we are beginning to see, leadership contingency theory becomes a much more complex theory-generation task when we include the spiritual underpinnings of religious beliefs as legitimate sources of discussion in leadership theory (see Fig. 1 for an extension of Yukl’s integrative leadership model which goes beyond the behavioral). In Fig. 1 three salient aspects of the model need elaboration. First, the constructs denoted by Roman numerals in small ovals are proposed as extensions to the behavioral-based leadership contingency model presented in Yukl (2002).

Second, the variable identified as “?” is varyingly referred to as “Yahweh”, “God”, “Allah”, “Shiva” or “Buddha Nature”, respectively within the religious traditions of Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism. However, within both Judaism and Islam the ultimate reality of what is commonly called “God” in English is argued to be beyond all names and not nameable — God is the “negation of all negation”, the “absolutely infinite” (in the Jewish Cabala, *En-Sof*) or the “Mystery of Mysteries” (*ankar al-nakirat* in Islamic Sufism). In Buddhism it is referred to as that which is Uncreated and Unborn or *bodhi*, Original or Enlightened Spirit. Hence, we are using a “?” to refer to that which is ontologically beyond names and, hence, uncreated. This “?” possibly is: 1) a “socially constructed reality” which is created by those with religious beliefs, aspirations or experiences; 2) an “emerging reality” which is co-created between human beings and “God”, or 3) a “Being” which is real unto itself. We would argue that the model proposed in Fig. 1 is not
dependent on which of these three interpretations is the veridical meaning of what is signified by the “?” because it is the constructed sense-making of the “?” that infuses meaning and values in leaders.

Finally, the construct labeled by “?” is a latent variable which is both exogenous and endogenous to the leadership construct. It is exogenous in that it is believed by all five religious traditions to be the source and sustainer of the universe, and, in addition, the source of all situational variables. Paradigmatically this is far from a strictly causal model where we can identify endogenous and exogenous variables that are distinct from one another and non-confounding.

This “?” “God, the Creator” or the bodhi, in Buddhism, from a spiritual viewpoint is not simply endogenous to the individual leader since, according to each of the religions, it is the source of inner, or spiritual, perception and belief. This 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…” (‘Arabi, 1975, p. 57). To define mysticism we turn to Annemarie Schimmel, the noted Harvard University Professor of Islamic studies: “Mysticism has been called ‘the great spiritual current which goes through all religions’” (Underhill, 1956). In its widest sense it may be defined as the consciousness of the One Reality — be it called Wisdom, Light, Love or Nothing” (Schimmel, 1975, p. 4).

Obviously, from a normal science research perspective this “?” becomes highly problematic to anyone who is a researcher, especially from a structural–functionalist paradigm (see Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Wilber, 1996, 2000a, 2000b), since it is not even strictly nameable – and certainly not a variable which is controllable in any normal sense.
6.1. Spiritual values and leadership

The concept of spiritual or religious values has been previously researched within the psychological literature. Rokeach (1973), in his classic study, *The Nature of Human Values*, states: “A value is an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite mode of conduct or end-state of existence” (p. 5) and that “values are multifaceted standards that guide conduct in a variety of ways” (p. 13).

Values may be either terminal or instrumental, that is, ends in themselves, or means towards desired outcomes. Consistent with Kriger & Hanson (1999), we shall treat values as terminal, desirable end-states in themselves, but which can also be instrumental in creating greater personal competence and organizational effectiveness.

In the growing literature on spirituality in the workplace, there is beginning to be an emerging consensus on which spiritual values are primary or core. The emerging consensus is summarized in the following list:

- Forgiveness
- Kindness
- Integrity
- Compassion/empathy
- Honesty/truthfulness
- Patience
- Courage/inner strength
- Trust
- Humility
- Loving kindness
- Peacefulness
- Thankfulness
- Service to others
- Guidance
- Joy
- Equanimity
- Stillness/inner peace

See Kriger & Hanson (1999), Fry (2003) and Giacalone & Jurkiewicz (2003) for sources that identify a rather consistent set of values, which are associated with spiritual leadership. We wish to note that lists of such values can be found in all five religious traditions. For example, in the Judaic tradition there is the prophet Elijah, who is mentioned often in post-Biblical folklore and writings (Schram, 1991, pp. xi–xvi, Forward by Dov Noy). Noy states: “…the name of Elijah (Eliyahu in Hebrew) endows him with multifaceted, all-embracing, and multidimensional merits that unite confronting and seemingly opposed values: leniency and strictness, love and hatred, zealotry and tolerance, and so on” (D. Noy in Schram, 1991, p. xv).

In each of the other four focal religions there are remarkably similar role models. For example, in the Islamic tradition there is a leader-guide called al-Khidr, who assists others, including Ibn ’Arabi, to reconcile apparently opposing, but complementary value sets (’Arabi, 1971). In the *Bhagavad Gita*
Prabhavananda & Isherwood, 1951) Krishna provides advice to Arjuna on the balancing of opposing values and in the Buddhist tradition there are numerous role models provided by masters and teachers dating from the time of the Buddha, over a time span of 2500 years, who show others how to embrace complementary value sets and behaviors through the use of skilful means in ordinary life. Finally, Jesus extensively used parables and stories to teach others how to embrace complementary values; for example, how to be (outwardly) meek and simultaneously how to be strong in faith (inwardly). However, further discussion of these value-reconciling leader–role models is beyond the current scope.

6.2. Discussion of the proposed contingency model

Examining the content of the model in Fig. 1 more closely we argue that the latent variable “?” is the primary cause of three constructs: 1. inner leadings from prayer, contemplation and meditation; 2. ethical norms and leader moral examples; and 3. the situation. In turn, constructs I (inner leadings) and II (ethical norms and moral examples) are both argued to have direct effects on leader values and attitudes (construct IV). Essentially, the values and attitudes of a leader are hypothesized to come not only from the individual’s early childhood development (Piaget, 1977), but also from moral role models and ethical examples from the sacred writings of one’s religion plus on-going dynamically created feelings and inner leadings that are arise through contemplative prayer and meditation (construct I).

We further hypothesize that an organizational leader’s values and attitudes (construct IV) will moderate the effect of leader vision (construct II) on leader behavior (see Fig. 1). A vision is defined as a long-term future image of what the business or organization can be, which is constructed in the mind of the leader, as well other relevant organizational members (Kouzes & Posner, 2002). Furthermore, the “perceived fit” between the values espoused by a leader and his or her behavior (construct V) is hypothesized to have a direct effect on the level of subordinate commitment to the unit’s vision and goals. This, in turn, is hypothesized to increase subordinate effort (construct VI), which, in turn, results in increases in outcome measures such as: 1. organizational profit, as measured by return on assets (ROA), return on investment (ROI) and profit increase; 2. realization of values and vision; and 3. collective organizational good to society and key stakeholders.

We note here that leader values and attitudes (construct IV) are hypothesized to result from several potential sources: 1) spiritual activities such as prayer, contemplation and meditation (construct I); 2) religious sources, such as the ethical norms, holy texts and moral examples from one’s religion (construct III); and 3) family upbringing and education. Leader vision (construct II) can also come from multiple sources: 1) inner inspiration including spiritual “leadings,” and 2) the previously communicated and shared aspirations of others in the organization.

The remainder of the model in Fig. 1 is explained in detail in Yukl (2002, chapter 8). For readers who are not familiar with the model a brief explanation of the three types of situational variables may be helpful. “Neutralizers are any characteristics of the task or organization that prevent a leader from acting in a specified way or that nullify the effects of the leader’s actions. For example, a leader’s lack of authority to reward effective performance is a situational constraint that serves as a neutralizer” (Yukl, 2002, p. 217). A “substitute”, in contrast, makes a leader’s behavior redundant or unnecessary. “Leadership substitutes focus on whether subordinates are receiving needed guidance and incentives to perform without taking it for granted that the formal leader is the primary supplier” (Howell, Bowen, Dorfman, Kerr, & Podsakoff, 1990, p. 23). Examples of leadership neutralizers are: 1. subordinate indifference towards rewards; 2. inflexibility in organizational rules or policies; 3. geographically
dispersed work sites; and 4. low position power of the leader. Examples of leadership substitutes are: 1. a high level of experience or ability of a subordinate; 2. an intrinsically satisfying task; or 3. a cohesive work group.

We have altered Yukl’s dependent variable, “criteria of unit effectiveness,” to be labeled “outcome measures,” where outcome measures can be of three types to reflect varying stakeholder concerns. They are proposed to be: 1. for owner or investor concerns, organizational performance measures such as profit, return on investment (ROI), and return on assets (ROA); 2. for overall purpose, the realization of long-term organizational values and vision; 3. for employees, work satisfaction; and 4. for the wider societal concerns, collective organizational good, i.e., what the organization contributes to the betterment of relevant communities.

7. Discussion

7.1. Validity and potential biases

The creation of an organizational leadership model, based on the underlying worldviews of five world religions, has obvious potential for bias to enter. We shall attempt to address potential concerns by discussing two salient areas: 1) the sources utilized for the construction of the proposed theoretical model and framework, and 2) the experience base of the authors.

7.1.1. Choice of references and the perennial philosophy worldview

We have chosen primary and secondary reference sources for each of the five religions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism), which emphasize their underlying spiritual worldviews, rather than their explicit religious practices. We have done this in order to be able to explicate the commonalities in viewpoints rather than the differences due to ritual and practice. Thus, we have discussed and drawn upon sources that focus on long-term tendencies in thought and moral action that underlie each of the religions. For example, in Islam we have steered away from sectarian differences. And in Buddhism we have drawn upon elements of the common worldview underlying the theravada, mahayana and vajrayana traditions, rather than emphasizing the differences which have arisen in practice since the time of the Buddha (Goldstein, 2002).

The cautionary words of Smith (1991) are appropriate here:

How is it possible to say in a manageable chapter what Christianity means to all Christians? The answer, of course, is that it is not possible — selection is unavoidable. The question facing an author is not whether to select among points of view; the questions are how many to present, and which ones. (italics in original) (p. 3)

This reasoning applies equally to writing about any of the world’s major religions, including Buddhism.

The page limitations of this journal simply do not allow for a detailed discussion of what amounts to one to four thousand years of evolution within each of the religions. As a result we have chosen to go into greater depth in Islam and Buddhism rather than to delve more superficially into all five religions. In addition, anyone reading this article who tends towards fundamentalism in Christianity, ultra-Orthodoxy in Judaism, fundamentalism in Islam or is an adherent of a sub-sector of Buddhism or Hinduism which
believes that his or her group has the sole approach to religious “truth” will probably be less comfortable with our integrative arguments and take issue with the “perennial philosophy” perspective we have chosen to adopt. In the perennial philosophy perspective each of the world’s religious traditions represent parallel approaches to the same underlying spiritual wisdom (see Huxley, 1944; Perry, 1971; and Novak, 1994 for scholarly attempts over the last 60 years to explicate the traditional wisdom of the perennial philosophy).

7.1.2. Religious orientation of the authors

Second, a brief description of the religious orientation and experience of the authors may also be helpful to the reader to address potential concerns that our “home” religion(s) may be sources of bias. One of us was born into a Christian Protestant family and the other into an orthodox Jewish family. Both of us studied within these traditions until early adulthood. Subsequently, both of the authors have done graduate work in comparative philosophy and religion and have written about the teachings of Islamic philosopher–mystics such as Ibn ’Arabi and Mevlana Jelaluddin Rumi, noted writers of the 13th century from Andalusia Spain and Turkey, respectively.

In addition, one of us has studied Zen and theravada Buddhism as well as advaita (nondual) Hindu philosophy (vedanta) for more than two decades. Thus, any biases we might have from our initial religious upbringings (Christianity and Judaism) we believe are counter-balanced by study, and practice, of at least one other religion of the five that are drawn upon to construct the reasoning used here. One of us has studied all five traditions for over 25 years and the other currently teaches courses on Islam at a Christian theological seminary. This multi-tradition exposure has sensitized us to the need to take care that the proposed model and framework is not biased towards any one particular tradition (see Tables 1 and 2, and Fig. 1).

7.2. The nondual worldview and leadership

As the reader hopefully has seen in the preceding sections, the orientation towards the religions used to construct the overall theoretical framework is a nondual viewpoint, that is, where the Truth pointed to by each of the religions is the same, but the methods and paths by which that Truth comes to be realized are different according to historical cultural orientations. The nondual in Judaism is best exemplified by the Cabalistic interpretation of the Torah by classical Chassidic Masters such as the Baal Shem Tov (1698–1760), Reb Menahem Nahum of Chernobyl (1730–1797), and Reb Nachman of Breslav (1772–1810) (see Buber, 1958; Nahum, 1982); the teachings of the Desert Fathers and the Cloud of Unknowing (ca. 14th century) in the Christian tradition; and the Sufi tariqah and leadership examples of al-Hallaj, Attar, Rumi (1207–1273) (see Nicholson, 1970) and Ibn ’Arabi (1165–1240) (see ’Arabi, 1971, 1975) in the Islamic tradition.

In the Hindu tradition the nondual is described in the advaita teachings of Shankara (788–820 A.D.) and Ramana Maharshi (d. 1950), both of whom taught that all of reality is an undivided unity, and that what we believe to be personal individuality is the result of misperception (see Lipner, 1994; Maharshi, 1994; Zaehner, 1966). Finally, in Buddhism the nondual is exemplified in the Heart sutra of the Sutra-Pitaka (250 B.C.), the Abhidarma (80 B.C.) and the teachings of Nagarjuna (ca. 200 A.D.) and Milarepa (ca. 800 A.D.) (see Goldstein, 2002). In sometimes rather hidden ways all of the preceding exemplary gnostic–mystics from the five religions have had their nondual worldviews come to permeate many different subsequent works within their traditions, and beyond.
As a result, the growing research and conceptual efforts to investigate and advance the construct of spirituality in the workplace would do well to incorporate some of the highly relevant constructs and ways of thinking that pervade the aforementioned oral and written teachings, especially as regards writings on the transcendence of separation and multi-level ways of conceptualizing being that are to be found in the sources in the previous paragraph. (For several of the more noteworthy recent efforts which aim to advance the construct of spirituality in the workplace see: Fry, 2003; Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003; Gozd & Frager, 2003; Pfeffer, 2003).

7.3. Ontological and epistemological levels within the nondual

Within all of the preceding spiritual sources there is an underlying non-dual orientation and belief that a human being can reach Self-realization, a state of non-separation with the Ultimate Truth or God. In this state, it is posited by all five spiritual traditions that the experience of separation can diminish, or even dissolve, through spiritual contemplation, prayer, and meditation. Thus, if a bias is to be found in the current work it is towards this non-dual orientation, which we argue lies at the heart of each of the religions of the world, not just the five we have chosen to utilize in the construction of this conceptual work. The demonstration of the pervasiveness of this nondual perspective for the remaining religions of the world, by necessity, lies beyond our current scope.

However, according to all five religions, within the nondual there are multiple ontological levels of being along with corresponding epistemological ways of knowing them (Wilber, 2000b). (See Table 2 for a summary of these five levels of being in the terminology of each of the five religions).

The correlates to these five ontological levels, from an epistemological viewpoint, include: 1) the level of nondual consciousness; 2) the consciousness of Spirit; 3) the consciousness of the soul world; 4) the creative imagination and world of images; and 5) consciousness of the sensible (physical) world (see Table 2 — columns 4 and 5, for the Christian and Buddhist cognate epistemologies).

7.4. Measuring and determining differing ontological levels of spirituality

Recently there have been a number of calls by organizational researchers to develop a science of workplace spirituality. These researchers are advocating finding ways to measure and to model workplace spirituality (Barrett, 2003; Mason, 2003). Giacalone & Jurkiewicz (2003), in their steps towards this aim, offer a definition of workplace spirituality and then delineate 15 definitions of spirituality present in the literature. They then proceed to discuss three “stances” or relationships that theorists and researchers are likely to have regarding the research of spirituality in the workplace, and by implication, spiritual leadership. The three potential relationships regarding spirituality in the workplace they identify are: 1) a parallel relationship; 2) an adversarial relationship; and 3) an integrative relationship.

In the context of the reasoning in this article, where we have identified five ontological levels of being, with five corresponding epistemological levels, the task of specifying a scientific approach to the study of spiritual leadership in the workplace becomes a much more complex task than previously conceived. This five-level ontology is consistent with, though more abbreviated than, the extended work on multiple levels of epistemology by Wilber (1996, 2000a, 2000b).
Those adhering to an adversarial or parallel stance from a spiritual perspective are likely to argue that the scientific study of spiritual leadership results in a “commodification of spirituality,” that is, that the domains of spirituality and organizational leadership either should not or cannot be integrated.

However, if we argue for an integrative approach to the research of spiritual leadership from a multiple ontology perspective (i.e., five levels or planes of being; see ‘Affifi, 1939; ’Arabi, 1975; Corbin, 1969), then our task is much more complex than previously acknowledged by the growing workplace spirituality literature. For example, Giacalone & Jurkiewicz (2003) advocate: “Precise measurement, using validated instruments can help organizations understand the utility of workplace spirituality” (p. 9). Specifically, from a nondual perspective precise measurement of the presence of nondual awareness is believed by many to be inherently not possible. The World of Absolute Mystery (‘Arabi, 1975), the Cloud of Unknowing (Anonymous, 1961), or the nondual nibbana (Buddhism) are by definition at a level of being where the discursive mind as knower has merged with the very object of knowing. There is no longer a distinction between the Transcendent and the immanent. Similarly, at the level of the En Sof in the Judaic tradition, there is no longer a separation into or an appearance of opposites. However, parenthetically, it may be possible via the use of brain imaging techniques such as fMRI or PET scans to find proxy measures for the presence of nondual awareness in subjects.

A leader living and behaving from the nondual viewpoint no longer sees a distinction between the “leader” and the “lead.” From this nondual paradigm followership and leadership are simply labels that overly constrain role sets to individuals who have the potential to enter roles as needed dynamically in the situation arising in the moment.

Anderson (2000), cited in Pfeffer (2003), states: “spirit comes from the Latin word spiritus meaning ‘breath.’ It is defined as the vital principle or animating force traditionally believed to be within living beings.” Pfeffer then goes on to identify four factors that people value at work which are consistent with building spirit in the workplace: 1. the ability to realize full potential as a person (self-actualization, Maslow); 2. feeling a connection between one’s work and a larger overarching purpose, such as social good in one’s community; 3. being able to feel part of a larger community or being interconnected; and 4. being able to live and work in an integrated fashion. The terminus of the spiritual path in all five religions is Ultimate Liberation (moksha, in Hinduism; nibbana in Buddhism) or absorption into the Divine Oneness in Judaism, Christianity and Islam. This nondual level, as we have portrayed it, includes the four factors of the spirit identified by Pfeffer, but adds a fifth factor — experiencing cessation of all separation between self and other, work and spirit, leader and lead.

We note, in closing this section, that nondual awareness has been attributed to the leader-founders of all five religions by followers of these religions. Whether these leader-founders actually embodied a nondual level of being and awareness is outside the scope of an article on organizational leadership. However, what is salient for our present discussion is that five highly varying religions (in terms of origin, practices and belief systems) have developed five highly extant literatures referring to an essentially identical end-state, which we have called the nondual. This finding, in itself, is a compelling reason for further development of the concept of spiritual leadership from a multiple ontology perspective. In essence, through the extended recorded histories of Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism humankind has observed, and is participating in, five still-unfolding natural experiments concerning what constitutes the most integrated levels of inner meaning and
realization which are possible, not just for leaders but also for all people, regardless of their role or status.

7.5. Spiritual leadership revisited

Having identified the core concept of multiple levels of being, including the nondual, we shall now revisit the subject of spiritual leadership one final time. An analogy will help here (Smith, 1991). Each of the world’s religions has been likened to a chariot wheel, where the outer practices, rituals, and ethical precepts are the circumference of the wheel (in Islam, shari’at); the spokes of the wheel are the spiritual paths (tariqat), the paths of each religion (the spokes) all lead to the same central Truth (Haqiqat).

Spiritual leadership, building on our prior investigation of the five religions, including our more in-depth expositions of Islam and Buddhism, can now be more carefully defined as:

the directing of self and others to achieve collective purpose from a sense of shared community, where behavior and manifested values are contingent upon the operant level of being of the leader(s) and the dynamic perception of the situation in the environment coupled with the inner meaning arising from moment to moment, out of a direct perception of and sense of connectedness to the whole.

The spiritual leader, in the multiple-level ontology paradigm, is viewed as integrating his or her being with that of others via collective images, thoughts, feelings and behaviors to create shared purpose and meaning. There are in effect five classes of leadership theories that map onto each of the five ontological levels, ranging from nondual leadership (Level I) on through behavioral leadership theories (Level V). At present there are no known nondual theories of leadership in the organizational literature. Wilber (2000a, 2000b) describes a framework that could be used to construct such a theory. At present most organizational leadership theories are Level V theories, being based on activities and behavior in the observable world (Evans, 1970; Fiedler, 1967; Graen, Alvares, Orris, & Martella, 1970; House, 1971, 1996; Yukl, 2002, chapter 8).

7.6. Implications for the future development of leadership theory

There are three implications for the future development of leadership theory: 1) the emergence and confrontation of multiple paradigms; 2) the end of strict causality; and 3) the emergence of techniques for the simultaneous study of inner and outer experience (phenomenological, behavioral and spiritual methods).

7.6.1. Multiple paradigms

According to Hans Kung, the noted Christian scholar of comparative religion, Judaism has gone through five distinct paradigmatic periods in its four millennia history (Kung, 1992). A paradigm is defined as: “An entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, and so on shared by the members of a given community” (Kuhn, 1962, p. 175). These five paradigmatic periods, according to Kung, are: 1) the tribal paradigm of the period before the state (2000–1200 BC, including Moses and Judges); 2) the paradigm of the kingdom, the monarchical period (1000–556 BC, including David and Solomon); 3) the paradigm of theocracy, post-exilic Judaism (556 BC–70 AD, including Nehemiah and Ezra); 4) the medieval paradigm, the rabbis and the synagogue — Rashi and
Maimonides (2nd–18th centuries); 5) the modern paradigm — assimilation (18th–20th centuries). Kung argues that a new paradigm is currently emerging for the Jewish faith, but is unsure what form this latest paradigm will take.

We have briefly portrayed these five paradigmatic periods in Judaism for two reasons. First, it gives a sense of the vast time periods of development of thought and culture that have taken place not only in Judaism but also, by developmental implication, in all of the five religious traditions. Second, if Kung is correct in his 750+ page comparative analysis of Judaism, which covers also extensive comparisons with Christianity and Islam, there is a remarkable similarity in the world-views of these three Western religions, that is masked by the current appearance of terrorist acts in the name of Islam, and Judaism, on the world stage.

We would argue that the emerging paradigm is likely to be a fusion of the currently ruling scientific paradigm of the renaissance and post-renaissance period with the convergence of a post-modern spiritual paradigm arising out of the interaction of the belief systems of the major religions of the world. This will have major implications for the future development of leadership theory and research, but is beyond our current scope.

7.6.2. The end of strict causality

The model proposed in Fig. 1 is, at first glance, a causal model of spiritual leadership. However, there is an important latent variable in the model that has significant implications for the further study of the proposed constructs in the model as well as research of the proposed extension to situational leadership theory. The latent variable, “?” according to our earlier discussion of the nondual, is a variable in a holonomic paradigm. Each level of being in the model is part of a “holonic system.” As mentioned earlier, a holonic system is one where each lower level of a system is embedded in a higher-level system. A holonomic paradigm is a model in which each of the parts of a system encode sufficient information to reconstruct the whole of the system. Thus, each holon is embedded in a higher level holon, with the exception of Level 1, where the nondual or “?” is uncreated and, hence, has no prior cause. See Bradley (1987, chapters 9 and 10) and Bradley and Pribram (1998) for in-depth discussions and descriptions of holonomic systems.

Since the nondual is both the source of all other variables, as well as the interactions between variables in the system, it is evident that this system does not contain strict causality since the “?” has effects in all parts of the model. According to both Ibn ’Arabi and the Buddha, as well as the Jewish Cabbalists and Hindu worshippers of Shiva, this is the Uncaused Cause which is both the origin and the result of Itself. To reflect this writers such as Ibn ’Arabi (’Arabi, 1975), Ramana Maharshi (Maharshi, 1994), Dogen (1975) and Menahem Nahum (Nahum, 1982) used often elliptical language to portray the epistemological reality of the nondual.

7.6.3. Emerging research methods

In the past decade a rather remarkable convergence of researchers and theorists has been taking place, culminating in a two-day conference at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in September 2003. There were several Nobel Laureates present including Professor Kahneman (Nobel laureate in Economics, 2003); a Nobel laureate in Biology, and the Dalai Lama (recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize). The conference was convened by the latter of these distinguished individuals, who had been gathering leading physicists, philosophers, neuroscientists, and psychologists together for the previous 15 years in the privacy of his living quarters in India (Dalai Lama & Goleman, 2003). For the first time this
gathering was held in a public arena, Kresge auditorium at M.I.T. with over 1200 people attending. This event was an historic undertaking — the meeting of the Western behavioral traditions of economics and neurobiology with scholar–practitioners from the Eastern spiritual tradition of Buddhism. The implications of this event for the further development of spiritual leadership theory and research are discussed next.

7.6.4. The simultaneous use of first, second and third person research methods

From the perspective of our prior discussion of ontological levels 2–5, it is possible to engage in scientific study and instrumentation of the topic of spiritual leadership. A number of psychologists, neurophysiologists and neuroscientists from the West have begun to join with researchers from the Buddhist tradition to understand how the brain functions differentially in individuals who have had differing amounts of awareness training (Davidson et al., 2003). These scientists have been developing first, second, and third person research methods for the study of consciousness (Dalai Lama & Goleman, 2003, pp. 305–333). They report that first-person research approaches, such as “neurophenomenology,” combined with third-person approaches, such as brain-imaging techniques (e.g., PET and fMRI techniques), can be instrumental in understanding how the brain is activated during varying types of awareness in controlled experiments. However, they find that without the use of simultaneous first-person research methods (e.g., systematic real-time reporting of what individuals are experiencing, by the individuals themselves) the data in these third-person brain studies are found to be impossible to interpret in a valid way. The Dalai Lama & Goleman (2003) state: “The only way to truly understand what is going on is to ask people for a precise report of what they are doing mentally while their brain activity is being precisely measured. Without the first-person data in such studies, neuroscience is blind” (p. 313). In the further study of spiritual leadership there is likely to be the same need for simultaneous first and third person research techniques.

Thus, the still nascent field of spiritual leadership could engage in comparable multiple methods. For example, researchers might collect data using third-person paper and pencil instruments, (or the use of brain imaging methods, such as functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) or EEG techniques, to determine whether self-reports of higher levels of awareness are associated with particular patterns of brain activity or inactivity), along with second-person observation and coding of non-verbal behavior, as well as simultaneous elicitation of detailed first-person reports from individuals as to what they are experiencing inwardly and what meaning is arising while they are leading others. Such research designs would be challenging but not impossible to conduct, and would be consistent with current efforts taking place in the field of cognitive psychology and neurophysiology (Davidson et al., 2003; Lutz, Greischar, Rawlings, Ricard, & Davidson, 2004).

8. Conclusion

At some time in the history of the universe, there were no human minds, and at some time later, there were. Within the blink of a cosmic eye, a universe in which all was chaos and void came to include hunches, beliefs, sentiments, raw sensations, pains, emotions, wishes, ideas, images, inferences... and the taste of banana ice cream. A sense of surprise is surely in order. How did that get here? (Berlinski, 2004, p. 26, italics in original)
Mitroff and Denton, in their book, *A Spiritual Audit of Corporate America*, nicely summarize our overall viewpoint as regards the need for critical thought and reasoning, while investigating and discussing the subject of spirituality in the workplace, when they state:

The serious study of spirituality and the soul does not mean the abandonment of critical thought. To admit the phenomenon of spirituality, or to go beyond admitting it to believing it, does not mean that one ceases to engage in legitimate criticism or rational thought. (Mitroff & Denton, 1999: 26)

When we contemplate leadership through the paradigms of the religious traditions of Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism, there are a number of ways in which leadership with inner meaning has overall relevance for the further development of organizational leadership theories in the 21st century (see Table 1). For example, the leaders in Judaism since Abraham have asked questions about the nature of the Divine (the origin proposed by the world’s religions of the *that* in the quote that opens this section) and how to relate to the often seemingly capricious nature of that evolving force.

Thus, we find in the Judaic tradition an extended valuing of question-asking and creation of meaning through dialogue with the Divine, as recorded in the Tanakh (five books of Moses). In Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism we find exemplars in Jesus, Mohammed, Krishna and the Buddha who provide role models for effective leadership in their respective traditions (see Table 1, lines 1 and 2). The nondual, though it is varyingly referenced in each tradition, is the same essential concept when terminology is analyzed for its deeper semantic meaning. Finally, all five faiths have some version of the Golden Rule and espouse “love for the other as oneself” at the core of their belief systems.

However, despite the differences in practice and in terminology, an underlying “transcendent unity” is pointed to in all five religious traditions. In the evolution and histories of the five religious traditions, encompassing approximately 82% of the population of the planet, we see the record and unfolding of five parallel “natural experiments,” which have taken place over the last 1400 to 4000 years, depending on the tradition. Some of these experiments have historical interconnections and have influenced each other, most notably, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, where all have the same common root in Abraham, but then subsequently have diverged and developed their own practices and belief systems. Others have been totally separate experiments. For example, Buddhism, which arose in the 6th century BC, and Islam, which began in the 7th century AD, had no known cultural or historical contacts, until the 9th century. Despite a time separation of 1200 years and a cultural and geographical separation of several thousand kilometers in their origin, the two religions have remarkably similar underlying ontologies, but with differing language systems, as summarized in Table 2.

A note of caution. The fact that approximately 82% of the people in the world espouse and hold spiritual or religious worldviews clearly does not allow one to conclude that this worldview is the veridical one. However, one can argue from this evidence that it is highly likely that those who exercise leadership roles in organizations, and who believe in spiritual or religious belief systems, will have their leadership behavior shaped by the underlying values and attitudes of those worldviews. This is clearly an area for likely future empirical research.

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2 It is only in the 9th century in Afghanistan, as we know from the creation, and recent destruction, of the giant Buddhist statues in the cliffs at Bamiyan, that the two religions came into contact, with Islam eventually wiping aside all other cultural traces of the prior existence of Buddhist culture in the area. In addition, at about the same time in the 9th century, a powerful Buddhist dynasty of grand wazirs, the Barmakids, were advisors to the Abbasid Caliphs in Baghdad from 775–809, during the “golden years” of Islam.
Reference to the nondual transcendent unity, as we have seen, infuses the core beliefs, moral precepts and values of all five religions — and their leadership models. This nondual unity is described succinctly by Cohen (2000, pp. 95–6):

Heaven and hell, good and evil, everything known and unknown, seen and unseen are all recognized only to be different expressions of that one inconceivable mystery beyond name and form. Beyond all pairs of opposites, the glory of God is all there is — just absolute, incomparable perfection... Before time and space, before the universe was born, there was nothing. There was an explosion, and what we all are right now — including you and me — is that explosion in motion. (italics in original)

Thus, one of the greatest challenges to the further development of spiritual theories of leadership in the workplace is to generate further theory and research methods to investigate leadership within a paradigm of multiple levels of ontology and epistemology.

The reconciliation of the apparent differences in approach between science and religion as well as the bridging of the differing languages of spirituality in the world’s religious traditions are among the most important challenges confronting the world community today (Smith, 2001). Without such reconciliation, religious conflict will likely continue to increase around the globe. However, discussion of this sorely needed reconciliation in leadership, at all levels of scale, is clearly also beyond the scope of this paper.

In conclusion, there are three contributions which we have intended to make: 1) that there are multiple (at least five) ontological levels operating in the domain of spiritual leadership, culminating in the nondual; 2) that although the behavior of the leader–founders of all five religions appear at first to fit the charismatic models of leadership, upon closer examination, with the introduction of a paradigm of multiple ontological levels of being, it is more appropriate to apply an extension of the contingency theory of Yukl (2002) on leadership to include the dynamic interpretation of values and meaning internal to the leader, contingent upon the leader’s level of being; and 3) that since over 80% of the world’s people are members of a religion or a spiritual path, it is highly likely that these spiritual value structures, attitudes and belief systems are significant sources of unexplained variance in the on-going attempt to understand what explains leadership behavior and meaning in organizations and institutions at varying levels of scale.

It is our hope and intention that this article provides a language system of key concepts and the foundation for an integrative model for the understanding of spiritual leadership in organizations from a multiple religion and multiple ontology perspective. It is also our hope that others will continue this task, which is far from complete. The development of a contingency theory of spiritual leadership is still in its early stages and, hence, there is much potential for future research.

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