Nancy T. Foltz is owner and principal of Nancy T. Foltz, Ph.D., and Associates and serves as a management consultant to religious organizations and large corporations. She has completed strategic plans with major judicatories and has worked with high-performance teams in organizations such as Medrad Inc., University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, USX, Magee-Womens Hospital, The McCune Foundation, Princeton Theological Seminary, The Rabbinical Assembly, General Motors, Whirlpool, and the United Methodist General Board of Higher Education and Ministry.

Foltz is adjunct professor at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. She has published numerous books, articles, and videos and, for the past 20 years, has lectured across the United States on the Myers-Briggs Personality Inventory.

The Artistic-Soul Side of Leadership

Nancy T. Foltz

There is a story told in the East of five brothers who were traveling. Each of them was gifted in some way, but when they arrived at a certain place they suddenly found that they had lost their talents. They were confused, disappointed, and they were wondering about the reason of such an experience until the wisest among them, by the power of concentration, found in the end that it was the effect of the place. The place had lost its life, it was a dead place. Everyone who came there felt as if he had no life in him, the inner life had gone. We see the same happen in land, which after having been used for many thousands of years has lost the strength, the vitality of the earth. If externally the land can lose it, then internally also the vitality, the breath of the land can be lost. Often one feels most inspired in one place, in another place most depressed; in one place confused, in another place one feels dull, one finds nothing of interest, nothing to attract one. One may think it is the effect of the weather, but there are places outwardly most beautiful in nature, with wonderful climates, and yet you do not feel inspired there. . . . If there is no nourishment artistic impulse will become paralyzed. Even a plant is not sufficient in itself; it must have air, sun and water. Yet a prophet can inspire a dead land by just passing though it.[1]

When you first came into a leadership role, you probably had a dream—a vision of who you were and what God might be calling you to be and do. After hundreds of hours in meetings and sessions, you have adjusted your expectations many times. At times, the dream died. While you continued to participate in conferences and attend meetings, you knew deep down that the fire had gone out. The effect of the place was devastating. The passion was gone. The *soul side* of what once fired you up had turned to cold embers and a vague memory. You were a walking desert.

One of the images I use in my work with leadership teams is that of "de-layering" the artistic-soul side of leaders. So often in my work, I discover that the artistic domain of these leaders' lives has been covered over. Frequently, as I look over a room of leaders, I realize it is filled with great potential for the *artistic-soul side* of leadership, but that for some reason this potential is blocked. These leaders mouth the right words, but there is no heartbeat, no soul, to what they are saying.

Yet many leaders still remember the dream they once had. When they recount the story of how they came to be where they are, there is some latent energy, some words that have real power as they remember their own story.

Sometimes I ask leaders how they keep alive their creative, artistic side. Some do it by playing a musical instrument, often the same one they played in high school. Others paint, while yet others try photography. What these activities tell me is that, somewhere deep inside each of these leaders, the artistic-soul side lives on.

The soul side of leadership has been neglected in the life of organizations. The artistic side of the leader's work has been forgotten and the passion for making a difference has diminished. Where once leaders dreamed of contributing to the world in a significant way, now they spend their time fulfilling responsibilities, catching planes, running to meetings, and reading minutes of those meetings.

What exactly is the artistic-soul side of leaders? Put simply, it is the leader's ability to be conscious of her or his deepest reasons for being, and to reflect these reasons in her or his leadership. It means a constant awareness of *why* one is doing *what* one is doing in the place *where* one is doing it. The artistic-soul side is the leader's ability at any given time, in any given circumstance, to measure current reality against his or her full potential. It is the lifeblood that keeps the leader energized in the midst of challenging work that yields few external rewards. Not surprisingly, for me, the artistic-soul side is a theological issue. Our lives are gifts from God; and living before God is a divine calling. The deepest impact our lives can make relates directly to this God-given potential. Thus, it behooves leaders to engage in deep reflection.

How does the artistic-soul side get layered over? Sometimes, our profession adds a layer. At other times, our organizational life or our personal lives are the culprits. Each layer obscures access to the depth of potential we have as artistic-soul leaders. Soon, our leadership response is superficial, dry, and downright boring, to us as well as to our colleagues.

How do leaders uncover or de-layer the artistic-soul side in their work? I truly believe that when leaders delayer the artistic-soul side of their leadership, they discover pathways to imagination, creativity, and passion. Responding adequately to the complex issues in today's world requires that leaders avail themselves fully of their artistic-soul side. The potential of the artistic soul allows leaders to face the future with imagination, creativity, and passion front and center. I cannot imagine addressing current issues without it.

Leaders who are in touch with their soul side display a deep sense of hope and energy, both in their words and in their body language. Where the artistic-soul side of leadership

operates, conversations are engaging, and complex problems and sensitive issues are explored and addressed with imagination and care.

The fact is, what goes on in boardrooms and committee meetings – in both religious and nonreligious organizations – often seems to stifle the artistic-soul side of leadership. That raises the question: What is it about current ways of interacting and relating in organizations that prevent the artistic-soul side of leaders from emerging and flourishing? In what follows, I address this question with reference to religious organizations and religious leaders, although much of what I say can be applied to any organization, religious or nonreligious.

Why Has the Soul Gone Out of Leadership?

Religious organizations still function with antiquated systems that stifle high-performing leadership.

Most organizations want high-performing leaders, but such leadership cannot be had without dismantling old systems that impede its development. Each organization must define for itself what *high performance* means, asking questions like: How are leaders encouraged to achieve high performance? Do the existing systems create the possibility for high performance?

The possibility of achieving high-performing leadership in systems that were designed for the 1950s is slim. The only way this might work is if leaders are able to challenge successfully the current systems, procedures, and models. In my experience, though, more often than not high-performing leaders end up in an impossible situation: They are asked to work within existing structures that confuse, slow down, and create wasteful layers that drain their time, energy, and resources.

Today's leaders are facing complex global issues that require multiple skills, changed attitudes, and exceptional imagination. When organizations insist on procedures, regulations, personnel policies, and board expectations that are unrealistic and antiquated, leaders are unable to function efficiently. They lack the resources for facing the enormous tasks and whipping up the energy required to solve such complex problems. More than that, every time they face these kinds of obstacles, high-performing leaders die a little.

Trying to work within systems created for another time and place, reach agreements about expectations that are unacceptable, and struggle without success to have a life outside of work, contribute to a life divided. In a divided life, inner and outer values, expectations, and hopes and dreams become nightmares as the leader struggles to embody values that are not his or her own. In the midst of such a conflict of values, Parker Palmer suggests, leaders "lose heart." He observes,

> *By choosing an undivided life, I implicitly acknowledge that the institution would not have had power over me if I had refused to go along with it. No longer are "those people" or "that place" my immediate problem. My immediate problem is me and the*

silent conspiracy I have had with the institution, the conspiracy that allowed that institution to rule my life. . . . The moment we decide to stop being our own enemy, we free ourselves from institutional constraints and gain power to confront the institution.[2]

Not surprisingly, when there is little life and heart in the leaders, not much happens in the organization.

Could it be that leaders stuck within 1950s-style organizational models are so ill equipped to change the system that they simply give in, give up, and burn out? In the 1950s, people filled religious sanctuaries, fully expecting that the religious rhythm of their communities would continue. Pastors and other religious leaders had well-defined job descriptions and were serving relatively stable, homogenous communities.

Life has changed dramatically in the intervening half-century. Now, large buildings house small congregations. Increasingly, old rules and regulations no longer make sense. Membership roles, artificially boosted by the names of inactive members, perpetuate the false perception that the congregation is healthy. Fewer and fewer leaders pay attention to the community outside the church's doors, let alone to the church's mission to the world. Too many churches have trimmed their vision to the walls of the congregation. When congregations begin to see their primary task as taking care of current members, we have lost our way as God's people. Most of all, we have lost the leverage of the imaginative, passionate, creative potential that God has given us.

The issue is not that the church does not have enough pastors. Rather, the issue has to do with denominational systems that are out of date, and the myriad ways in which these systems sap leaders' energy and heart. As Lyle Schaller observes, "The problem is not a shortage of talented ministers. The apparent shortage of talent is really a consequence of ecclesiastical systems that set ministers up to fail rather than to create an ecological environment that fosters success."[3]

Shelved plans carry enormous emotional and organizational latent energy.

In my work with organizations, I usually ask the leadership to name the two outcomes from their latest strategic plan that produced the most significant and lasting results. More often than not, I encounter the same scenario: there was a planning effort; a consultant came and a document was produced; but no one really knows what outcomes or results came from the effort.

Nothing is more damaging and energy draining for leaders than a planning effort that went nowhere. Shelved plans steal enormous energy and hope from leaders. No leader in his or her right mind would want to participate in the next "plan." When plans are not implemented, the result is mistrust and a waste of resources.

In short, organizations without a plan in motion have powerful leaders and resources going every which way except in an agreed-upon direction. Leaders who are too busy to know their organization's plan are simply too busy.

Plans are a way for organizations to participate proactively in their future. If they would

take the plan off the shelf and select from it those ideas and issues that need to guide the organization's future, then there is a chance that emotional energy could be released.

Most organizations spend more resources in getting people to meetings than they do in preparing leaders to help shape the organization's future.

Like most leaders, I am not fond of meetings. I have had my share of the same meetings, repeated month after month. How do we stop the cycle of inane gatherings where no one really has given thought to the benefit of preparing an agenda, known how to measure what happened, or challenged participants to use their brains on imaginative solutions and approaches to complex issues that face the organization?

Rule number one is to clarify the expectations the organization has of its leaders. How do employees learn what the organization expects of them? Are these expectations reasonable? Do members of the board of directors understand the expectations that come with their role? When meeting notices state a clear organizational expectation, high-performing leaders generally agree to participate because of some hope that they might offer something of value to the organization. The crucial question is this: Do the organization's leaders really know the values that drive the organization?

When leaders tell me about marathon council or board meetings, it is obvious that participants were permitted to ramble on aimlessly and to harp on pet peeves. When I ask what the meeting accomplished, usually the response is, "Not much." Religious leaders waste precious hours in meetings that go nowhere. If the least important issues take the most amount of time, then where does that leave the most important issues?

When 90 percent of an organization's time is focused on operational issues, the chance to lead strategically is lost.

Most leaders in religious organizations spend so little time separating strategic issues from operational issues that they have no chance to set a strategic direction for the organization. *Operational issues* refer to maintenance concerns that every organization must address: fixing a leaky roof; updating equipment; paving the driveway; painting walls. *Strategic issues* include exploring relocating the organization to different premises or undertaking a major effort to recruit, retain, and integrate new members.

Trimming the focus of leaders to the operational level creates one more layer that covers up their artistic-soul side. When leaders lack the opportunity to be bold and bodacious in their contributions, the artistic flame dies. A friend of mine helps boards develop the skills to build agendas that clearly separate strategic from operational items. Knowing the difference between strategic and operational is both a discipline and a skill. It is a mental model that helps organizations recognize the difference between day-to-day issues and issues that catapult the organization into the future it desires.

A recent study of leaders in top management yielded some surprising results.

• Top management spends less than three hours a month talking about issues involving strategy.

- "[A]s much as 80 percent of top management's time is devoted to issues that account for less than 20 percent of the company's long-term value."

- More than 65 percent of team meetings are used not for decision-making but for information sharing, group input, and discussion.

- Just 12 percent of the executives believed that their top management meetings "consistently produced decisions on important strategic or organizational issues."

- Less than 5 percent of survey respondents said their company had a "rigorous and disciplined process for focusing top management's time on the most important issues."[4]

What amount of time does your organization spend on strategic issues as opposed to operational issues?

Granted, both strategic and operational issues are important, and organizations need leaders who attend to both. But, in my experience, the strategic usually gets shortchanged. And when little time is spent on the strategic, big-picture issues, artistic-soul side leaders soon find their energy waning.

Wanting to get the most out of their leaders, many organizations forget that work is only one part of life for a healthy adult. Creating healthy work environments would change the internal and external landscape of leadership.

"I can't tell you when last I had a day, let alone a week, off."

"The work load grows but the hours don't. I find that I'm taking work home more than ever before."

"I used to go to the gym, but nowadays it takes too much time; so I quit."

I hear such comments all too frequently. People do have a life outside of work. There are families to care for, loved ones to attend to, and people to see socially. There is restorative power in being with friends, seeing a movie, or taking a walk in the woods. There is more to life than work.

It worries me when I see religious leaders displaying behaviors that appear to be compulsive, obsessive, and dysfunctional: incessant meetings, long hours at work, missed personal events, a sense of being a "martyr." Eva Kaplan-Leiserson's comment is sobering: "An astounding 80 percent of college-educated employees want to work fewer paid and unpaid hours than they currently do. How many is ideal? The number of hours they're scheduled to work, not the number they actually do."[5]

I am impressed with organizations that pay attention to the whole person and offer incentives for participation in physical fitness programs. Many organizations know that a physically fit leader has lower health-related costs than those who pay no attention to their physical health. In a religious environment, one would expect spiritual health to be a high priority. What if the *whole person*, not just the spiritual aspect, were considered a high priority in the workplace? Then one would find a work environment in which the whole

person is treasured–in which personnel policies, day-to-day interactions with colleagues, as well as family and home life are considered a unit. As Parker Palmer suggests,

> *To live divided no more is to find a new center for one's life, a center external to the institution and its demands. This does not mean leaving the institution physically; one may stay at one's post. But it does mean taking one's spiritual leave. One finds solid ground on which to stand outside the institution–the ground of one's own being–and from that ground is better able to resist the deformations that occur when organizational values become the landscape of one's inner life.*[6]

A major issue in creating healthy environments is to open communication patterns that encourage the airing of emerging issues and nasty tangles. When leaders offer regular sessions to raise such concerns, and provide a forum and guidelines, people can articulate issues before they get twisted and turn ugly. When we talk about everything except the real issues, credibility is lost. Nagging issues left unattended severely impede healthy communication.

Leaders who know no boundaries "overgrow" their people, leading to enormous loss of soul power in the organization.

When leaders overreach in their influence and power, their organizations tend to lose creativity, imagination, and passion. Contributions are diminished and people are undervalued; yet such leaders appear blind to this loss of potential. It is unfortunately true that being an expert "is a severe impediment to listening and learning."[7] Sometimes a leader/expert assumes to know more than he or she actually knows, often accompanied by unhealthy interaction with coworkers. "We've cultivated a lot of bad behaviors when we're together–speaking too fast, interrupting others, monopolizing the time, giving speeches or pronouncements. Many of us have been rewarded for these behaviors. We've become more powerful through their use. But none of these lead to wise thinking or healthy relationships. They only drive us away from each other."[8] The vocal chords are overused and the ears underused.

Well-defined job descriptions, regular dialogue about how to work across departments or divisions, conversations that encourage sharing information rather than hoarding it–all contribute to a healthy work environment. When leaders make assumptions about work assignments without testing these assumptions with coworkers, boundaries are crossed. This does not mean that job descriptions are hermitically sealed boxes never to be invaded. Rather, it means that when new assignments arise, there is discussion about how best to handle them.

Refusing to speak up when you are part of the problem contributes to an organization that is stuck.

Many leaders hesitate to speak up during meetings. Afterwards, they share with a select few of their coworkers what they should have said to the full group. Knowing when to speak up and when to encourage others to do so is an art form. "Talk by itself, even brilliant speeches by famous people, does not create new realities. Most of the time it

reproduces old ones."[9] It takes courage and strength to do more than skate through a meeting and an agenda. Encouraging members to speak their minds moves the group to a high level of listening and to responding in imaginative ways that bring resolutions never thought possible. Moreover, forthright, honest dialogue ensures that issues are raised in the meeting rather than in the parking lot or the hallway.

The frightening thing is that too many organizations settle for the status quo. In such an environment, there is no tolerance for change; indeed, there is active resistance to change. As Adam Kahane points out, the unwillingness to change often masquerades as politeness. "When we talk politely, we are following the party line, trying to fit in and so keep the social system whole and unchanged, even though the whole may be diseased or counterfeit. . . . Our fear and politeness ended up smothering change. We accomplished the formal objective of the project, but we didn't produce results that anyone cared about."[10] Nothing is more damaging to the heart of a team than to smother real conversation with politeness.

We have all heard of the kind of passionate conversation that comes straight from the heart. I remember a meeting in which the chair had the courage to speak honestly about the problems afflicting the organization. He likened the organization to a "broken heart" and named how and why the heart was broken. This leader took the conversation beyond politeness to the heart of the matter. It required great courage to voice the words. It took "soul."

To get to this level of "soulful" dialogue, teams would do well to agree on certain ground rules, such as to "'call things by their name'; to express their differences without irony; to assume the good faith of others; to be tolerant, disciplined, and punctual; to be concrete and concise; and to keep confidences."[11]

Healthy organizations practice going beyond polite conversations. They engage in disagreements and healthy exchanges that move an organization to new spaces and challenges.

Leading From the Soul

Passion-filled leadership will change organizational life.

In healthy organizations, leaders exhibit passion and tenacity—a wonderful combination of high energy and clarity about the direction the organization should take. People who lead with passion and tenacity encourage new ideas and remove the barriers that stand in the way of achieving something new. In a "passion-filled" work environment, leaders know why they are there and what is expected of them. They are clear about the future direction of the organization and how it plans to get there; and they are committed to participating fully in achieving the desired future. Most of all, leaders know they are valued.

For most leaders and teams, the energy for achieving great things is just an arm's length away; but they need help in accessing that energy. Finding ways to release the passion in leaders begins with examining the ways in which leaders are valued and invited to participate in the direction of the organization. In a learning organization, people "feel

they're doing something that matters – to them personally and to the larger world. . . . Every individual in the organization is somehow stretching, growing, or enhancing his capacity to create."[12]

Individual, collective, team, or organizational energy usually is trapped in some place or mechanism in the organization. When individuals, teams, and organizations discover what it is in the organization that gives them energy and find strategies for releasing that energy, they can connect with their artistic-soul side. Then they can dislodge and resolve any issue or problem with deep imaginative resolution.

Our chaotic times need resilient leaders.

These days, every organization will experience change, even chaos. Therefore, it is critical that organizations develop resilient leaders who know how to respond when chaotic times arrive. Chaos comes in many forms: dried-up funding streams, lack of accountability, a surprise merger, a decision to reorganize. Whatever the form, chaos frequently finds organizations and their leaders scrambling, often resulting in crazy things happening.

Resilient leaders know that when chaotic times come the organization must respond. Rather than digging in their heels, these leaders harness the energy in the organization to make decisions based on some new impact or change occasioned by the chaotic situation. As Margaret Wheatley points out, "We can't be creative if we refuse to be confused. Change always starts with confusion; cherished interpretations must dissolve to make way for the new. . . . If we can move through the fear and enter the abyss, we are rewarded greatly. We discover we're creative."[13]

Most organizational momentum comes from disruption at the borders of an organization's life. What is at issue is the capacity of leaders to respond with resilience rather than with a desire for stability. Organizations that acknowledge that change, even chaos, is an inherent part of their work environment will do well to develop the imaginative side of their leaders, which implies the need to take risks.

Resilient leaders are undaunted by the challenges thrown up by times of change or chaos. They resolutely press on to the Promised Land when others are ready to return to Egypt. What is the source of this internal strength? Only God can provide it.

Knowing the difference between strategic and operational issues can enliven, embolden, and engage the soul side of leaders.

Leaders who have the skill to differentiate strategic from operational issues can change the nature of meetings. Many church boards and congregations spend 99 percent of their meetings taking care of maintenance issues rather than strategic issues. Efficient meetings have agendas that clearly distinguish between strategic and operational issues. Team members know the difference between strategic and operational issues and are provided sufficient information about strategic issues (which often involve taking risks) to reach common ground. Moreover, having the right leaders participate in the right conversations contributes to a healthy organization.

If mission, vision, and values don't "walk the hallways," "fly on the planes," and "sit around the boardroom," then they don't exist.

Challenging leaders to walk and talk the mission, vision, and values of the organization brings authenticity to their language, behavior, and attitudes. Organizations would do well to commit their values to paper and then evaluate every major decision against these values.

Mission, vision, and values are the "holy trinity" of planning. Any plan that lacks these components has little heart, continuity, or integrity. *Mission* states what an organization is and why it exists. *Vision* articulates the organization's fundamental "calling" in the world. *Values* are the stabilizing force in the organization's decision-making processes. If the organization's values are upheld and supported in its decision-making, chances are the decisions will be solid.

I sometimes imagine asking leaders to carry signboards that state the mission, vision, and values of their organization. I imagine telling them to talk with one another about their experience working for the organization in light of the organization's vision, mission, and values. Do they feel marginalized or sidelined? Do coworkers acknowledge their presence and contribution? If the organization's mission, vision, and values don't "walk the hallways," "fly on the planes," and "sit around the boardroom," then they don't exist. Few leaders listen to people who don't walk and talk their stuff.

Goals with heart and soul give leaders a rhythm and a beat.

Goals provide the pathways for living an organization's mission, vision, and values. The "SAM test" usually works: Goals need to be *specific*, *attainable*, and *measurable*. It is important to ask what outcome the goal seeks to deliver and what will happen as a result of the goal being reached.

Many organizations have viable goals that are expressed in different places throughout the organization. It helps to check in periodically on the progress toward the goals. Most leaders want to complete assignments and want to know that their accomplishments assist the organization in reaching its goals. Therefore, it is important to assess assignments regularly in terms of the organization's goals. Such checking in or follow through expresses the organization's commitment to accountability.

After plans have been written, goals clarified, and assignments given, it is time to act. Sometimes, we discover the goals are wrong or just don't work. Or we find that, while a particular goal may look good on paper, it is not matched to the organization's mission, vision, and values. Having the courage to check and double-check goals provides leaders with the energy and soul to continue.

Focusing on leaders' potential orientation rather than on their performance orientation will change the workplace environment.

When we think of performance, we think of projects finished and work done. When we think of potential, we think of revision and change, something in the making, a creation in progress. In an organization geared toward performance, leaders usually prepare for

assignments in isolation. Work is shaped, changed, and revised in "silos." In organizations operating from a "potential orientation," leaders work collaboratively through consultation, dialogue, drafts, and test runs. Work is brought to the table for response rather than for a stamp of approval.

Performance orientation focuses on the "star quality" of an *individual* leader, making sure he or she shines and is noticed in the organization. By contrast, potential orientation focuses on results gained from collaboration—on the *team's* rather than the individual's response to a problem or challenge. While diligence, commitment, and a desire to achieve characterize both orientations, only an orientation to potential focuses on an end result that serves the good of the whole organization. When leaders are unclear about the team's or the organization's focus, there is apt to be more *performance leadership* than *potential leadership*. Today's global workspace requires that leaders uncover in themselves the full potential that each can bring to the table. Organizations need to give less space to performance orientation and more to leaders' fulfilling their potential. The artistic-soul side of leadership depends upon leaders stepping up to their potential.

Performance reviews tell a leader something about the organization's expectations. Reviews focused on leaders' potential take account of the willingness of the team or the organization to stretch beyond current expectations. Did the leader or team stretch beyond the basics? Were they willing to take reasonable, calculated risks in the interest of shared goals? Does the leader or the team reflect on potential as the cutting edge of growth in leadership? A leader who fulfills the basic requirements of his or her work may receive a great performance review. However, a leader who views his or her work holistically, collaborates with multiple teams, is able to create new alliances, and can reflect on team potential heightens the possibilities for change in the organization's life.

It is difficult for leaders to know when they are functioning more from a performance orientation than from a potential orientation. A friend of mine is a violinist. Her performance anxiety was getting in the way of her playing until she acknowledged that she had a "performance block." Once she realized this, she could change her behavior. Many leaders are so focused on their performance that they miss the fact that their performance is getting in the way of expressing their true potential. Changing behavior starts with leaders' recognizing their performance block.

What if organizations were to encourage potential orientation in leaders rather than performance orientation? Some leaders fail to take risks because of a performance expectation, either self-imposed or instilled in them by the organization. What is lost as a result is the leader's potential to make a possibly extraordinary contribution to the organization.

Responding to the most powerful person in the organization with respect based on position or role contributes to creating a healthy environment.

It is difficult to work with leaders one does not respect. It is equally difficult to work in a setting in which one is not respected in return. Respecting others and being respected are

vital requirements for healthy work environments. Mutual respect among leaders creates opportunities for truthful and honest conversations and decision-making.

When leaders can respond to the most powerful person with respect based on position and or role there is a chance that the organization will be respected and viable for its constituents. When the most powerful person is feared, leaders have lost their gift of participation.

In a learning organization, people "treat each other as colleagues. There's a mutual respect and trust in the way they talk to each other, and work together, no matter what their positions may be."[14] In the absence of mutual respect and trust, the hallway instead of the boardroom often becomes the venue for discussing issues, leading to loss of energy, passion, creativity, and imagination.

It is tough to invite people to talk about what they really think and feel. Leaders have to determine how much truth and feeling they are prepared to handle. It may surprise some, but it is difficult to exhibit the qualities of honesty and truth in religious organizations. Too often, religious leaders second-guess the wisdom of speaking the truth for fear it will rupture relationships or upset certain individuals. Healthy organizations have leaders who care about people but who will not hesitate to state concerns about the direction the organization is taking or the wisdom of a particular decision.

"People cannot hear you unless they are moving toward you, which means that, as long as you are in a pursuing or rescuing position, your message will never catch up, no matter how eloquently or repeatedly you articulate your ideas."[15] Knowing when people are moving toward you is a skill to be developed. Knowing when you are taking a pursuing or rescuing position is also a skill. The church needs leaders who have reflected deeply on the difference between these two modes of leadership. Without such reflection, we are likely to encourage codependent relationships.

And then there is sabotage. Sabotage is alive and well in most organizations. "Differentiation in a leader will inevitably trigger sabotage from the least well differentiated others in the system."[16] Healthy leaders know the difference between a legitimate conversation and a conversation intent on sabotage. They also learn how to handle sabotage, because they realize the risk of sabotage simply comes with the job.

When leaders are afraid to speak to the most powerful person, an organization is in trouble. When there are no forums to challenge a decision respectfully, share a perception, or question the direction the organization is taking, there is a problem. After all, why shouldn't an executive, a president, or another leader be challenged? The worst that could happen is that the challengers have misunderstood or that the leader needs to rethink an issue.

Emotional Intelligence, along with a high intelligence quotient, is a dynamic duo in a leadership team: EI and IQ = Harmony.

Many leaders have a high IQ (intelligence quotient) but a low EI (emotional intelligence). Daniel Goleman, author of *Emotional Intelligence*, defines emotional intelligence as the ability to "motivate oneself and persist in the face of frustrations; to control impulse and

delay gratification; to regulate one's moods and keep distress from swamping the ability to think; to empathize and to hope."[17] These qualities, skills, and characteristics are desperately needed to address the complex leadership issues of our day.

The artistic-soul side of leadership finds powerful expression in leaders who exhibit both a high intelligence quotient and high emotional intelligence. Religious communities struggle with highly charged emotional issues. Therefore, the successful religious leader is one whose attunement to the artistic-soul side enables him or her to hear and process both the intellectual and the emotional sides of an issue or conflict. When leaders neglect either side, conflicts intensify and relationships are jeopardized. As Goleman observes, "In short, out-of-control emotions can make smart people stupid."[18]

When leaders use only their intelligence quotient, decisions continue to be made but in an emotional climate that is toxic. As Edwin Friedman notes, "Whenever any institution, relationship, or society is imaginatively gridlocked, the underlying causes will always be emotional rather than cerebral."[19] There are many religious leaders with high intelligent quotients but just as many with low emotional intelligence. Consequently, when relational issues emerge (and they always will), these leaders tend to duck and hide. They shy away from addressing confrontations that involve relationships.

This shouldn't come as a surprise. Many religious leaders base their decisions on the need to preserve group harmony. Harmony is a good thing, but not without the qualities of truth and justice. This combination is tough to achieve for any leader. It requires using both IQ and EI skills; and few leaders exhibit both in dealing with sticky problems. This is so because most leaders would rather be liked than to cause a disturbance. They prefer to avoid conflict at all cost. Unfortunately, the cost is high.

"Mature leadership begins with the leader's capacity to take responsibility for his or her own emotional being and destiny."[20] The next, perhaps more demanding, step is to develop this maturity in leading a team, a board, or an organization. This requires that leaders use both their IQ and EI to lead often-immature organizational systems to a level of true harmony in which truth and justice flourish. This is a demanding task. As Friedman observes, "It is easier to be the least mature member of a highly mature system than the most mature member of a very immature system."[21] Unfortunately, there are many immature systems in religious organizations.

Friedman suggests that leaders develop a nonanxious presence. "Clearly defined nonanxious leadership promotes differentiation through a system, while highly reactive, peace-over-progress, anxious leadership de-differentiates a system."[22] Finding our way through immature systems and promoting differentiation through a system takes a healthy leader.

We can't have it both ways. Leadership is not a popularity contest. Leadership is a way to live the values embedded deep within us. Hopefully, leadership gives us an opportunity to return to God the gift of life.

The Challenge of "Remusicking" the Artistic-Soul Side of Leaders

What will it take for leaders to see with fresh eyes? Will their impact on their organizations be different if they open their ears and hearts to the world around them, to the sounds, the faces, the needs, and the creative human potential and wisdom in their midst? I hope so.

According to Richard Florida, "While roughly 30 percent of our national workforce enjoys the ability to use their creativity at work and get paid for it, they leave the remaining 70 percent holding on dearly to far lower-paying service or manufacturing jobs – stalled in place on the ladder of socioeconomic mobility."[23] Lack of creativity and imagination is at work in congregations as well as in culture. Our capacity as religious leaders to alter the artistic landscape in our institutions is essential to fostering a healthy culture.

Torah scholar Avivah Zornberg observes, "Before the Torah . . . comes prayer; which means song; which engages with the problem of inconsistency and the search for inner stability." The Israelites had a tune and tone problem. They were out of tune with God and they needed to develop an even tone to accommodate their highs and lows. It was song and prayer that sustained them in the wilderness. They needed to be "remusicked." Their bodies were to house the Torah. Day after day, they needed to be attuned to the inner music that would allow them to move spontaneously. "This is the work of 'remusicking': thoughts and questions, fears and fantasies are to be given free play, while the habit of a pure desire takes hold of their bodies. Given world enough and time, the vibrations of a new music may liberate them from the decrees of Egypt."[24]

The artistic-soul side carries the constant reminder that leaders need to check their "tune" and their "tone." When leaders are out of tune and unable to accommodate their highs and lows, they diminish their potential.

Perhaps we as leaders need the work of "remusicking" – finding the places where we are not attuned to God and standing or kneeling in those spaces long enough to stop the whirlwind that is our existence. In so stopping, we may find new direction in spaces we did not know existed. We may find ourselves being formed and shaped in ways we had never imagined. According to one translation, when Jeremiah was sent to the potter's house, he went with "prophetic intent" (Jer. 18:1-3). I believe there are many leaders who have the capacity to lead with prophetic intent, but lack the attentiveness to what is happening below the surface in organizational and personal life. They lack the courage to speak the truth and the resolve to stop when they need to. This is a calling to no ordinary leadership. We are speaking of an inner and outer awareness that prompts our leadership actions.

For me, nourishing the artistic-soul side in leaders is the best hope for the world. It calls us to be the best we can be. It inspires us to live up to our God-given potential. In the space of the artistic soul there is music, imagination, passion, and creativity. The world can change and so can our communities and congregations. But first religious leaders must discover their artistic-soul side.

Notes

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4. Michael C. Mankins, "Stop Wasting Valuable Time," *Harvard Business Review* 82/9 (September 2004): 60-62.

5. Eva Kaplan-Leiserson, "The Changing Workforce," *Training and Development* 59/2 (February 2005): 11.

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7. Adam Kahane, *Solving Tough Problems: An Open Way of Talking, Listening, and Creating New Realities* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2004), 53.

8. Margaret J. Wheatley, *Turning to One Another: Simple Conversations to Restore Hope to the Future* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2002), 32.

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10. Ibid., 56.

11. Ibid., 61.

12. Peter M. Senge, Charlotte Roberts, Richard Ross, Bryan J. Smith, and Art Kleiner, *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook: Strategies and Tools for Building A Learning Organization* (New York: Doubleday/Currency, 1994), 51.

13. Wheatley, *Turning to One Another*, 37.

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15. Edwin Friedman, *Reinventing Leadership Discussion Guide* (New York: Gilford Press, 1996), 34.

16. Ibid.

17. Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence* (New York: Bantam, 1995), 34.

18. Daniel Goleman, *Working with Emotional Intelligence* (New York: Bantam, 1998), 22.

19. Friedman, *Reinventing Leadership Discussion Guide*, 32.

20. Ibid., 34.

21. Ibid., 32.

22. Ibid., 34.

23. Richard Florida, *The Flight of the Creative Class* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005), 17.

24. Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg, *The Particulars of Rapture: Reflections on Exodus* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 246.

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