THE EXPERIENCE OF SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE

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ABSTRACT: This paper focuses on spirituality as part of a broad understanding of intelligence and the inquiry into human abilities. Based on a theistic approach, spiritual intelligence is perceived as an ability to understand the world and oneself through God-centeredness and to adapt one's life accordingly. It is a basic ability that shapes and directs all other abilities. Relying on the personal experience of known spiritual authors and lay people, several attributes of spiritual intelligence, such as faith, humility, gratitude, integrative ability, the ability to regulate emotions, morality and the ability for moral conduct, and the ability for forgiveness and love, are portrayed in a non-inclusive description. Spiritual intelligence is considered as developmental in nature, built through the accumulation of separate experiences, as manifestations of spiritual intelligence appear in an individual's life in an increasing manner. An illustrative example of spiritual intelligence in action is provided.

Key words: faith, God-centeredness, human abilities, morality, spiritual intelligence.

INTRODUCTION

The study of human potential, abilities, and performance is the center of interest of various disciplines such as religion, philosophy, and sociology. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, modern psychology has attempted to lead this study and provide what is considered a scientific measurement of human intelligence, based on empirical data (Nevo, 1997). However, one may argue that the choice of data and the methods of measurement mostly reflect the researcher's basic assumptions about the nature of human potential and abilities. Hence, the definition of intelligence and the scope and methods of its measurement have varied and multiplied in time.

In his widely published book, *Emotional Intelligence*, Goleman (1997) succeeded in bringing emotional intelligence – a concept previously presented by Salovey and Mayer (1989–90) – into the discourse of lay people, as a means of understanding real-life issues. Similarly, I will attempt to describe the relationship between intelligence, spiritual faith, and a spiritual way of life, as a real-life issue central to people and cultures all over the world.

The term "spirituality" covers a broad spectrum of meanings and many definitions. In the current paper, I have chosen to adhere to a theistic approach to spirituality, based on faith in God. Being aware that different people from different backgrounds and at different times understand God differently, I will

attempt here to address the common denominator within this variety, that is, the perception of God as sacred, transcendent, supreme, and ultimate. Within this framework, spirituality is understood as the quest for the sacred (Pargament, 2007), a concept that may address some aspects of the non-theistic approach to spirituality, such as Buddhist spirituality, as well (Goleman, 2005). Consequently, I will attempt to apply the notion of intelligence to the discussion of theistic spirituality by re-introducing ''spiritual intelligence'' (to be defined later) – a term previously described by Emmons (1999, 2000), as well as others (e.g., Halama & Strizenec, 2004; Noble, 2000) - and to analyze its contribution to the understanding of human potential, abilities, and performance.

My aim here is to present spirituality as a basic quality from which certain skills or capacities arise. As already mentioned, my emphasis is theistic, i.e., that I understand spirituality in relation to God, but without adherence to any religious specification of God. In a non-inclusive description I will portray various attributes of spiritual intelligence, such as faith, humility, gratitude, integrative ability, the ability to regulate emotions, morality and the ability for moral conduct, and the ability for forgiveness and love. I will show how these virtues construct distinct, applicable, and adaptive ability. I will then discuss the development of spiritual intelligence, basing my arguments on results from research on the development of domains that are connected to the spiritual such as moral development, faith development, and so forth. Before the conclusion, an example of the experience of spiritual intelligence will be presented.

What is the Nature of Intelligence?

Within psychology, there are several diverse, conflicting ways of understanding intelligence. A prominent controversy refers to the generality of intelligence – does intelligence represent a general, core ability, named g (Carroll, 1997), or is it an umbrella term for different, loosely related abilities that construct multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1995)? A second controversy refers to the level on which intelligence is based – is it a representation of a physiological function of the brain neurons that defines one's potential and abilities (Eysenck, 1994), or is it a function of complex cognitive mechanisms not reducible to the realm of biology (Anderson, 1992)? Another debate relates to the domain of intelligence: Is intelligence a mental, purely cognitive function (Cantor & Harlow, 1994; Gardner, 2000; Hunt, 1997), or is it connected to other human domains, such as emotional content (Mayer & Salovey, 1993; 1997; Salovey & Mayer, 1989–90)?

The last controversy relevant here is whether values, beliefs, and attitudes play a role in defining and studying intelligence – is intelligence a morally neutral ability for processing information and its context (Gardner, 1999), or is it connected to personal virtues and moral conduct (Chiu, Hong, & Dweck, 1994; Sternberg & Kaufman, 1998)?

Apart from these controversies, there are also commonly held views about intelligence (Nevo, 1997; Sternberg & Kaufman, 1998); namely, that intelligence is related to a basic potential ability or abilities and to performance, and that it is connected to the acquisition and processing of knowledge. This basic ability or abilities guide people in adapting to and understanding the world.

THE STUDY OF SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE

Previous Studies

Gardner (e.g., 1995) established the concept of multiple intelligences that represent distinctively different human abilities. Emmons' work (1999) took it further, to include the spiritual as a distinct intelligence. According to Emmons (2000), specific abilities and competencies construct spiritual intelligence and may guide adaptive problem solving. He offered five characteristics that may illustrate spiritual intelligence: (a) an ability for transcendence; (b) an aptitude for reaching spiritual states of consciousness; (c) penetration of the sacred into everyday performance; (d) service of the spiritual as a resource for problem solving; and (e) the capacity to be virtuous, internally and in behavior. In a qualitative study of the spirituality of nine adults, Noble (2000) confirms these five characteristics, but adds two more: (a) "the conscious recognition that physical reality is embedded within a larger, multidimensional reality with which we interact" (Noble, 2000, p. 3); and (b) the search for psychological health of oneself as well as of others.[1]

Responding to Emmons (2000), Mayer (2000) questions whether one might speak of spiritual intelligence or consciousness, while Gardner (2000) opposes the inclusion of the spiritual as an intelligence, pointing to the need to differentiate between intelligence as ability and its use in various domains, including the spiritual. At that time, Gardner included the spiritual function within a distinct existential intelligence, although he later admitted that the criteria for separate intelligences are judgmental rather than an algorithmic conclusion (Gardner, 2003). On the other hand, Halama and Strizenec (2004) argue that the spiritual and existential are separate intelligences, although they may overlap. Kwilecki (2000) agrees with Emmons that spirituality may represent a distinct mode of adaptation and claims that spirituality represents a different-than-secular understanding of values and aims in life.

Although spiritual intelligence is a relatively new concept, different authors view it entirely differently. Zohar & Marshall (2001), for example, reduce Gardner's multiple intelligences to represent three basic intelligences: intellectual, emotional, and spiritual. The spiritual is the core intelligence that describes the ability to solve problems that relate to values, vision, and meaning. According to these authors, creativity is a major aspect of spiritual intelligence, and spiritual processes are manifested in physiological ones. Halama and Strizenec (2004) review other diverse comments and views about spiritual intelligence. For example, Sinetar (2000), cited in Halama & Strizenec

(2004), understands spiritual intelligence as inspired thinking within the general context of creative talent. MacHovec (2002), cited in Halama & Strizenec (2004), emphasizes the broad cross-cultural context of spiritual intelligence and considers it as a general sign of personality, while Bowling (1999), in Halama & Strizenec (2004), defines spiritual intelligence as knowledge of the sacred. Vaughan (2002), however, argues that spiritual knowledge must be expressed in the world through wisdom, compassion, and action: "Integrating spiritual intelligence means living in accordance with one's core beliefs" (p. 31). On the same line, Kass and Lenox (2005) conclude that when individuals practice life as an agent for spiritual growth they achieve their full choice of human potential. The centrality of spiritual intelligence to individuals' lives is also expressed in the conception of Rogers and Dantley (2001), who view spiritual intelligence as the root of thinking, which precedes any accepted sets, structures, or categories of thinking. Wolman (2001) continues this notion, while emphasizing the manifestations of spirituality and spiritual intelligence in everyday activities and relationships. This perspective of spiritual intelligence as a lived experience is one that frames this article.

Approach of this Inquiry

Since its early days (e.g., James, 1984), the psychological study of both religion and spirituality has presented knowledge acquired through personal experience (Richards & Bergin, 1997; Slife, Hope, & Nebeker, 1999). Accordingly, this inquiry into spiritual intelligence is based mainly on different sources of experiential knowledge (Borkman, 1990), that is, knowledge acquired through personal experience of theistic spirituality. Different religions and spiritual traditions and different people understand the term "theistic spirituality," as well as the image of God, differently. Here, however, I attempt to avoid any theological discussion or metaphysical disagreement, and to target common meanings based on the diverse personal experiences of people who follow a spiritual way of life. The focus of my discussion is subjective personal experience, based on subjective personal definition and narrative. Consequently, while they are diverse, all the sources describe personal experiences. The first source is the personal accounts of famous spiritual leaders such as Gandhi (Settel, 1995), Julian of Norwich (1997), St. Ignatius (Puhl, 1951), John of the Cross (1991), St. Augustine (2004), and others. I attempted here to follow what I perceive as the common essence of these influential thinkers, i.e., the central role of the spirit in most if not any human experience. Therefore, their writing is reflected throughout the entire text. The second source is the teachings of a widely known contemporary spiritual master from Israel – Shlomo Kalo[2] (see, e.g., Kalo, 2005). Finally, I learned from the real-life experience of many individuals whose struggle for spirituality I have witnessed following 15 years of studying followers of different 12-step programs (Ronel & Humphreys, 1999–2000; Ronel & Libman, 2001), running ongoing experiential courses on professional implementation of the 12-step program, as well as working as a therapist in public and private settings (e.g., Ronel, 2008; Ronel & Claridge,

1999). The 12-step ideology stresses the personal understanding and experience of theistic spirituality, which is also expressed here.

SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE IN PRACTICE

As already established, there are many different definitions of spirituality and how it is represented in one's life (Emmons, 1999; Richards & Bergin, 1997; Noble, 2000). From a theistic perspective, however, according to Kalo: "A spiritual purpose is – to expose spiritual thinking, spiritual feeling, spiritual will; to become entirely liberated from the secular, that is ….to be for God and for God only" (1993, p. 29). Accordingly, the spiritual action "is but the purification of your mind and the achievement of self-mastery on the way of awakening to see and to know yourself as an inseparable part of The Eternal. And this is gained by devotion to God and confidence in Him" (Kalo, 1999a, p. 80).

According to Kurtz & Ketcham (1992), "spirituality is, above all, a way of life" (p. 68). Theistic spirituality is a basic intention directed towards God and consists of an inner struggle (Ronel, 2000). Following Kalo's recurring theme (e.g., 1991), this struggle is characterized by an endeavor to purify one's mind. This view of spirituality acknowledges that there is a "dark side of the soul" and a conflict between the ego and the yearning for God (Kurtz, 1999). Human spiritual development is therefore a confrontation with one's "dark side" and an immense struggle to purify oneself from the other side, based on free will. In Kalo's (1999a) words, "One of the most important, independent spiritual acts that a sincere spiritual person should at all times, always, assiduously perform and never abandon in any circumstances, is the removal of non-spiritual elements from oneself, that is, to constantly and uncompromisingly depart from anything that has the odor of the ego" (p. 140). This view is also mirrored in Alcoholics Anonymous' 12-step approach, in which alcoholism is perceived as rooted in self-centeredness and recovery is attained while struggling for a higher power according to one's understanding of this power (Alcoholics Anonymous, 1976; Kurtz, 1999; Miller & Kurtz, 1994). A similar line of thinking is found in St. Ignatius' spiritual exercises: "We call Spiritual Exercises every way of preparing and disposing the soul to rid itself of all inordinate attachments, and, after their removal, of seeking and finding the will of God in the disposition of our life for the salvation of our soul" (Puhl, 1951, p. 1).

In the theistic approach, the spiritual struggle is based on spiritual knowledge related to God and the yearning for God. This knowledge leads one beyond the "darkness" of the ego and the everyday routine. Different people, in different circumstances, display different abilities to gain this knowledge. The ability to spiritually know, or the ability to yearn for such knowledge, produces the ability to choose and to adjust one's life accordingly. When the latter is activated, any other abilities of the individual are put in the service of the spiritual, which is the main struggle in life. Step 11 of AA states this clearly: "Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry it out" (Alcoholics Anonymous, 1965, p. 96).

What I have discerned here that may define spiritual intelligence is a fundamental and general ability that may present itself in any domain of life. Spiritual intelligence is an experience-based ability to understand the world and ourselves through God-centeredness: an ability to long for, to realize and to know God, to recognize and to choose the way towards God in all circumstances, as well as to detect self-centeredness and the manifestations of the ego in various situations, and to adapt the life accordingly.

From this proposed definition of spiritual intelligence, it can be inferred that the higher a person's ability to perceive and understand through God-centeredness, the less he or she is influenced by self-centeredness and ego. As Miller (2005) stated, "there is a higher standard, an ideal, an intended nature for human beings that exists apart from context and human thought" (p. 17). Spiritual intelligence may assist one to see things as they are, free from self-distortions (Vaughan, 2002). The essential similarities among the theistic spiritual teachings of different people at different times and places (see, e.g., Kurtz & Ketcham, 1992) support this claim. The following description of the attributes of spiritual intelligence, based on different spiritual sources, also exemplifies these similarities.

THE NATURE OF SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE: A THEISTIC PERSPECTIVE

Different people experience multiple ways of realizing and knowing God, as well as various ways of struggling against their self-centeredness. However, the ability to adapt these apparently different ways to the spiritual quest is a fundamental one. "Spirituality permeates to the very core of our human be-in, affecting the way we perceive the world around us, the way we feel about the world, and the choices we make based on our perceptions and sensations" (Kurtz & Ketcham, 1992, p. 68). Similarly, Pargament asserts: "When people sanctify, they look at life through a sacred lens" (2007, p. 35). The spiritual core ability may present itself in any ability that a person possesses. Spiritual intelligence may be presented within the entire person (Miller & Delaney, 2005), in any human function or domain, whether it is philosophy (e.g., Augustine, 2004), music (e.g., Handel's music), Gandhi's non-violent political struggle (Settle, 1995), or Einstein's thinking: "every one who is seriously involved in the pursuit of science becomes convinced that a spirit is manifest in the laws of the Universe" (Einstein, n.d.). It may be presented in any worldly concern, including marital relationships (Mahoney, Pargament, Murray-Swank, & Murray-Swank, 2003). Therefore, spiritual intelligence may be articulated as representing a general factor of intelligence underlying any other factor of intelligence.

Spirituality, as seen in most of its theistic definitions, functions in the world but refers to a transcendence that is beyond the material realm and the identification with our own body (Miller, 1998). The spiritual intention, motivation, and practices that refer to the transcendence may lead to various physiological, bodily processes (Emmons, 2000; Zohar & Marshall, 2001). Goleman (2005), for example, describes a sophisticated study of the brain

activity of a Tibetan-Buddhist monk while meditating, which showed a unique ability to control this activity. The spiritual practice – meditation – led to a unique physiological process. But the spiritual process points far beyond its physiological manifestation and it may be valid also in those cases when there is no unique physiological manifestation of the spiritual. While certain spiritual experiences may cause unique physiological processes, the definition of spiritual intelligence cannot be reduced to "nothing but" biological processes.

As its basic conception clarifies, spiritual intelligence, as represented here, is part of a broad perception of intelligence, which includes domains other than the cognitive one alone. I am suggesting that spiritual intelligence represents a fundamental domain that underlies all other domains of human function. Thus understood, spiritual intelligence is a core ability connected to and manifested in values, motivation, intentions, emotions, and personality structure.

THE APPEARANCE OF SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE

In the following section, I will attempt to describe some attributes and factors related to spiritual intelligence. This description, which is not comprehensive and still requires further additions and syntheses, represents the "ought," that is, the full potential indicated by the very concept of spiritual intelligence. It is important to remember that spiritual intelligence is also marked by a struggle against "the dark side of the soul"; hence the following description points to the vision that shapes this struggle.

Theistic spiritual intelligence, as a core ability, is based on the recognition of God and faith in God. Faith is an indicative attribute of a theistic perception of God and the consequent world order, a basic factor in spiritual intelligence, which provides the ideology and worldview necessary for its arousal. As such, faith is an act that gives meaning to the spiritual experience (Crapps, 1995), apart from just belonging to an organization that declares its spiritual intention, such as a particular religion. When faith is not yet present, spiritual intelligence may appear as willingness and openness for such faith (Anonymous, 1991; Ronel, 2000). Based on this willingness, people may act as if they have faith; in other words, they may activate their spiritual intelligence even before faith in God awakens within.

According to Kalo (1989b), faith is gained by the grace of God. People become ready for God's grace when they endeavor, honestly and continuously, to live a virtuous life. "Faith is a result of a pure mind; there is nothing as reliable as exemplary moral behavior to purify the mind" (Kalo, 1989b, p. 110). Spiritual intelligence directs the choice to struggle for the purification of the mind, with a growing attempt to practice moral conduct. This may strengthen faith, by the grace of God, which, in turn, serves as the basis for growing spiritual intelligence. Such development is well known in the writings of spiritual authors from different backgrounds such as Thomas Kempis (2002), a Christian teacher, and the Ramhal (1978), a Jewish one. In the 12-step program, this process is represented as an initial willingness towards

spirituality that leads to growing faith and deeper willingness (Alcoholics Anonymous, 1976; Anonymous, 1991). Several studies show the centrality of faith in God in the worldview transformation of members of 12-step self-help organizations aimed at recovery from different addictions (Humphreys & Kaskutas, 1995; Ronel & Humphreys, 1999–2000; Ronel & Libman, 2003). According to recovering members of these organizations, their ability to maintain recovery is strongly associated with the arousal of their faith in God. In other words, the awakening of spiritual intelligence nourishes their ability to recover.

Spiritual intelligence indicates a faith-based ability to experience the Sacred as the Supreme, an objective and absolute value (Otto, 1967). The recognition of the discrepancy between this holiness and worldly existence stimulates people's ability to humble themselves before God: ''Yielding [to God] is the master virtue, which produces control by the 'new self'. … A Christian view of self-control finds the self to be *inadequate* to win the struggle for virtue on its own'' (Worthington & Berry, 2005, p. 157). According to St. Ignatius (Puhl, 1951), ''every one must keep in mind that in all that concerns the spiritual life his progress will be in proportion to his surrender of self-love and of his own will and interests'' (p. 78). The struggle against selfishness and towards God requires a growing degree of humility (Puhl, 1951). Kalo (2000) tells us, ''The safe way for openness to God, the one and only, is humility'' (p. 64), and ''Humility is the avowed adversary of selfishness. Never is the selfish humble; never is the humble selfish. The way to attain humility is by uprooting selfishness, that is – knowing yourself as you are'' (p. 75). Therefore, humility can be understood as an attribute of spiritual intelligence, an ability shaped by faith that affects a person's intentions and motivation in the world. Humility, as an attribute of spiritual intelligence, directs those who possess it to considerations other than those of personal gain, hedonism, material profit, or self-power (John of the Cross, 1991). It stands in sharp contrast to the modern-day emphasis, at least in Western culture, on individuality and ''the culture of narcissism'' (Lasch, 1979). Hence, spiritual intelligence may take the form of an ability to humbly conform to spiritual principles rather than to the prevailing norms of the modern capitalist culture.

When people seek God and divine-like understanding, they may experience a growing ability to perceive the world and their place within it as meaningful constructs that may assist in their struggle. Everything that happens may be interpreted as a significant experience, essential to progress toward divine knowledge (Kalo, 2000; Otto, 1967). Therefore, spiritual intelligence represents the ability for integrative perception that sees the whole beyond its parts. This ability assists people on their spiritual path. It may help them perceive the world beyond selfish expectations and corresponding complaints (Kalo, 2000). Spiritual intelligence is characterized by the ability to see the best in seemingly painful circumstances, as well as to see the divine beyond the gains of the secular world. Alcoholics Anonymous and the 12-step self-help groups' daily practices of gratitude attempt to direct participants toward such a perception (Kurtz & Ketcham, 1992). In a phenomenological study of Narcotics

Anonymous members in Israel, gratitude was found to be a leading theme among many, to the point of even being grateful to their addiction and its consequent suffering, since they came to perceive it as a milestone in their spiritual progress (Ronel, 1993). The Hassidic story of Rabbi Zusia illustrates this view. Though he was known to have a troubled life, when asked how to follow the Biblical guidance to exalt one's own troubles in the world, he answered, "You must ask another person and not one like myself, whom evil has never caught" (Buber, 1979, p. 222).

With such a view, spiritual intelligence becomes an ability to regulate emotions. Usually, this ability is attributed to emotional intelligence (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). However, when spiritual intelligence awakens as a general factor underlying other abilities, it also guides emotional intelligence. Spiritually based functions accelerate the ability for emotional regulation (Geula, 2004). Alphonse Ratisbonne (Carmelle, 1984), a former Jew who became a Catholic priest after a revelation he experienced in Rome in 1842, described this ability (p. 38): "I shall tell you my secret: I tell everything to the Blessed Virgin, I confide to her my troubles, my sorrows and my anxieties and then I let her do what she wants. How can you expect me to be sad? I know very well that in this way everything will be done according to God's will and therefore, for the best, so I rejoice in advance." Julian of Norwich (1997) followed a similar line: "And the fullness of joy is to behold God in everything that happens" (pp. 67–68). St. Augustine (2004) also provided a similar understanding when he openly described his struggle with lust, the decision to put this battle in God's hands, and the relief he felt afterwards.

Generally, the discussion of the spiritual refers to moral values and behavior. For example, Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2003), who studied the influence of spirituality on perceptions of unethical business activities among 162 employees, concluded that the degree of individual spirituality influences whether an individual perceives a questionable business practice as ethical or unethical. Rest (1994) introduced four components that pave the way to moral behavior: (a) moral sensitivity, which is the awareness that a certain situation or behavior has a moral value; (b) moral reasoning, which indicates the process of deciding which line of action is more justifiable; (c) moral motivation, which relates to the importance ascribed to moral values in comparison to other values; and (d) moral character, which involves psychological strength that determines the ability to display moral conduct regardless of interfering influences. Since spirituality refers to the value systems of the people involved, when spiritual intelligence is activated in the life of an individual, it may direct this person to fulfill these four components. In such cases, moral sensitivity is experienced as a component of a broader spiritual sensitivity, that is, the ability to distinguish between the spiritual and the secular, and between self-centeredness and God-centeredness (Kalo, 1999a; 2000). The corresponding moral reasoning indicates an ability to morally judge a situation beyond the personal, social, or ideological standpoint of the viewer (Fernhout & Boyd, 1985; Kohlberg, 1975). It is an ethic of supererogation that sees every situation in the eyes of love and

through an integrative and infinite perspective (Kohlberg, 1981). Likewise, when spiritual intelligence is at work, the motivation for moral conduct is experienced as integral to the spiritual quest, and attempting to lead a spiritual life shapes the ability to actually practice moral conduct (Kalo, 1999a). Therefore, although spiritual intelligence is not identical to morality, it serves as a basis for morality and moral decisions (Wolman, 2001).

To sum up, as an ability central to real-life issues, spiritual intelligence is manifest in interconnected attributes: faith, humility, gratitude, integrative ability, ability to regulate emotions, morality and moral conduct. The thread that runs through these attributes is the purification of the mind on the way towards God by detecting and attempting to remove thoughts, emotions, and actions of selfish sources (Kempis, 2002). As Kalo emphasizes (1989a), such purification will enable individuals to reveal their true nature, which lies underneath their selfish motives. As spiritual intelligence grows, this nature reveals itself by the individual's growing ability to love (agape), the loving of God, and the love for fellows (Julian of Norwich, 1997; Kalo, 2001; Sorokin, 1967; Underwood, 2002). "Love is … your departure from all sensual pleasures for the sake of the object of love… Love is the most sublime, wonderful and pure thing… The one who loves is always happy" (Kalo, 1989a, pp. 53–55). Spiritual intelligence may direct people towards this kind of love and enable them to choose its path (Welwood, 1985). Following a similar line of reasoning, Brazier (1993) assumes that loving is a basic human need. When the need to love is not fulfilled, people may deteriorate mentally. Consequently, many therapists consider the ability for interpersonal goodness – the wish and willingness for the benefits of others - as one of the most beneficial results of a successful therapy (Nicholas, 1994).

Jaeger (1998) describes her own struggle to put such goodness and love into practice in her life in an extremely unpleasant situation. When her small daughter was kidnapped, she felt an initial rage towards the kidnapper. But soon afterwards, she struggled against this emotion, with the view that such an emotion is destructive and by no means loving. She clearly described her tremendous struggle for self-purification in order to find love within, even love for the kidnapper as a human being. Finally, she reached the point of forgiveness and gained some calmness that stood beyond the real-life pain. Hence, one more attribute of spiritual intelligence can be added: namely, the willingness and ability for unconditional forgiveness (Aponte, 1998; Enright et al., 1994). In this perception, the wrongdoer becomes identical to oneself and therefore deserves forgiveness equal to oneself. Such an approach views anger and resentment as obstacles on one's path to God (Alcoholics Anonymous, 1976; Anonymous, 1991). The ability to forgive is the ability to purify oneself from these obstacles, which enables love and getting close to seeing God in every person. As Gandhi asserted, "Love is the only remedy for hate" (Settel, 1995, p. 15), and "The real love is to love them that hate you, to love your neighbor even though you distrust him" (Settel, 1995, p. 41).

A key issue in understanding spiritual intelligence concerns its awakening and development. More often than not, researchers regard most of its attributes as factors that develop through stages. For example, morality, an important attribute of spiritual intelligence, is usually studied and described as a quality that develops through certain levels and stages (e.g. Gilligan, 1993; Kohlberg, 1975; Rest, 1994). Forgiveness (Enright et al., 1991) and altruistic behavior (Krebs & Van Hesteren, 1994), both of which may stem from spiritual understanding and the ability to function accordingly, are also considered to follow certain stages of development. Even faith, a central attribute of spirituality and spiritual intelligence, is seen as a quality that develops (Fowler, 1981).

Closer examination of the different theories of human development reveals a striking resemblance in the processes that they describe. Considering the development of moral reasoning, for instance, there is a development process that goes from a self-centered view of morality, through social morality, and up to a principled one (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987), which may be developed even further, to the stage of the morality of love (Kohlberg, 1981). The lower stages in themselves are not yet a pure, principled morality, but serve as stages in the progress towards it. Actually, reasoning of the lower stages is not considered true ethical reasoning. When reasoning is of the highest order, it is ethical, whether it is based on the ethic of justice or that of caring and love (Fernhout & Boyd, 1985; Gilligan, 1993; Kohlberg & Ryncarz, 1990; Ronel, 1998). Since reasoning in the lower stages is self-centered or self-social-centered, and not yet other-oriented or God-oriented, it is not yet an attribute of spiritual intelligence as defined here. Only in the highest stage – other-oriented or God-oriented stage – can moral reasoning be considered an attribute of spiritual intelligence. The achievement of the highest stage indicates the existence of the spiritual ability to comprehend and to act accordingly.

The development of other attributes of spiritual intelligence usually follows the same line – from lower stages with selfish motivation, through a socially influenced motivation and up to the pure form of an attribute, whether it is forgiveness, faith, or altruistic behavior (Krebs & Van Hesteren, 1994). Therefore, spiritual intelligence, as understood here, indicates a kind of dichotomous process – it is either awakened or not. The development up to a certain stage is preparatory, although many individuals may never progress further. Beyond that point there is a new cognition that represents a pure attribute, such as moral reasoning, forgiveness, altruism, or faith. Only when these qualities reach that point can they be ascribed to spiritual intelligence.

During different life experiences, people may develop through the preliminary stages, but only at a certain point can they discern an awakened spiritual intelligence. Yet, this is only one part of the picture, since one may question the continuity of spiritual intelligence – is it always there, always awakened? How does its existence relate to the struggle between one's ''dark side of the soul'' and the yearning for God?

Since I discussed spiritual intelligence as the ability to struggle against human selfishness and towards God, it becomes clear that during that struggle people may adhere to spiritual intelligence in certain moments only. One may not use it all the time, although it still exists potentially. Support for this last claim can be found in some cognitive-developmental theories of moral reasoning. Rest (1986; 1994), for example, notices that the same person, at different times, might exercise different stages of moral reasoning. Hence, he measures moral reasoning as a proportion of principled reasoning (Rest, 1993). The more often one exercises a high stage of moral reasoning, the higher one's stage of moral reasoning is. Similarly, spiritual intelligence is built through the accumulation of separate experiences, that is, individuals increasingly experience an expanded commitment to engage in actual spiritual practices (Wink1 & Dillon, 2002). The more moments in which people identify with God-centered motives (Kalo, 1999a), the more frequently they use spiritual intelligence as their principal intelligence. Therefore, I suggest that ''higher'' in spiritual intelligence means experiencing it more often.

<center>SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE IN ACTION</center>

While writing this paper, I came across real-life examples of people who chose to struggle against their self-centeredness as a means in their search for God. During their struggles, the diverse features of spiritual intelligence were revealed. To conclude, I will describe an example of such a struggle that portrays spiritual intelligence in action.

The example is that of a young orthodox Jewish family whose story was publicized several years ago on a highly rated Israeli television program. In the first of two episodes, it became known that these young people had bought a second-hand car with all of their savings (cars are relatively expensive in Israel). Unfortunately, after several months they discovered that it was a stolen car. So they searched for the legitimate owner and, to his astonishment, returned the car to him. They got nothing in return and could not afford to buy another car. A week later, on the same show, it was announced that the Israeli importer of that make of car had decided to give this couple a new car. While I was working on the initial stages of this paper, I decided to investigate this case further, and interviewed the young couple, while having their permission to publish their case (of course their anonymity is preserved, although they were ready to disclose their identity).

The husband described their inner struggle when their insurance agent informed them that the car was suspected as stolen. According to him, ''the temptation was great and painful.'' Friends advised them to destroy the car, which was the only proof of its being stolen, and have the insurance company pay for it. They both felt that doing so was not right and would contradict their faith and way of life. Indeed, when they decided to return it, they felt an immediate relief. However, the police ''were not cooperative at all'' according to this man, and after several months the owner had still not been found. A new temptation arose: if they waited long enough, the police might return the

car to them, as no one had claimed it. However, the man felt that this was a spiritual experience, not a financial one. Although they were relatively poor and had lost all of their savings, "money was not the issue at all". His decision was: "If the police are corrupt and do not do their job, let's do it ourselves!" After several weeks of independent investigation, they found the legitimate owner of the car and gave it back to him, just before he received his theft insurance payment.

The owner offered to go on a TV show with the story. Initially they refused, with a wish to stay "out of the limelight," but on second thought they accepted his suggestion, "to warn other people against this kind of sophisticated thief." When they were offered a new car, they initially refused it. However, the importer convinced the couple that it was really an inexpensive form of advertising. In the week between the two shows, several people who had watched the first show offered the couple money. They rejected all of it, although they did not know then that they would get a new car. When one woman insisted and sent them some money, they donated it to charity in her name.

Although outside the scope of this article to recount all the details of the couple's experience or the interview conducted, this example serves to illustrate the struggle for practicing faith in everyday matters. Although this young couple was advised to make a distinction between faith, morality and "real life," they choose differently, that is, to manage life according their spiritual understanding and intelligence. Doing so illustrates the role of honesty, modesty, and humbleness as part of their spiritual intelligence, as well as the emotional empowerment that was gained by their faith that assisted them to reject social pressure and to feel confidence and relief.

Conclusion

Spiritual intelligence is a somewhat confusing, contradictory concept (Wolman, 2001). While intelligence refers to human abilities, within the limited human nature, spirituality refers to the infinite that stands beyond the human. Whereas the human ability to adapt to the world usually points to the parts, spirituality indicates the whole, the one. Intelligence lies within the domain of the psyche, while spiritual teaching refers to a different domain, that of the spirit.

I have attempted to resolve these apparent contradictions and to describe the theistic spiritual experience as representing a core ability that directs and influences one's overall life – spiritual intelligence. I see it as a first attempt to introduce spiritual intelligence as a core ability, a *general* factor that penetrates into and guides other abilities. An analysis of the nature of this ability is suggested here, taking into account known controversies about the study of intelligence. In view of these, it is asserted here that the general nature of spiritual intelligence can be manifested in any human realm, whether cognitive, emotional, moral, artistic, creational or other, and hence it differs from other

forms of intelligence that are limited by definition (Gardner, 1995). In addition, unlike the perception of intelligence as a cognitive ability alone (Gardner, 2000), a broader understanding of the concept of intelligence is suggested. As such, spiritual intelligence is more than a cognitive ability to comprehend the spiritual in any given field; rather, it is a distinct ability for spiritual comprehension in general. Such a broad ability cannot be reduced to distinct physiological processes, although certain spiritual practices and abilities can be manifested by exclusive physiological activities (Goleman, 2005).

Spiritual intelligence is, then, a unique ability to understand, feel, evaluate, create, and act beyond self-centered motives and towards a spiritual meaning. As my approach is theistic, spiritual intelligence represents here the ability to recognize theistic meaning in a given situation and to direct one's motivation from a self-centered one to one that represents the spiritual, theistic meaning. Its various attributes, as emphasized earlier, are expressed in any life domain. These include personal theistic faith as a basic motive in life; humility and gratitude as a personal approach; an integrative, spiritual understanding of any reality; the ability to regulate emotions; the ability to morally judge a situation and to act accordingly; and the ability for forgiveness and unselfish love. Increasingly, people may experience these and similar attributes in their lives. At moments when these attributes become central to the individual, as in the example described above, spiritual intelligence is in action.

The above description of spiritual intelligence is a pragmatic one; it may assist people in self-evaluation of their personal spiritual intelligence (Underwood, 2002) and consequently, since spiritual intelligence is developmental, people may practice its development at any stage. Kalo summarizes this process: "to persevere on self-correction and not to let loose, free from fear, strong in hope, independent on the result" (2000, p. 110). First, people may evaluate the attributes of spiritual intelligence that have to be strengthened in their lives. Subsequently, based on the perception of the developmental nature of spiritual intelligence, people may practice an increased proportion of spiritual intelligence in their lives, thus potentially increasing their spiritual intelligence. It is assumed here, following the experience gained in 12-Step interventions, whether in self-help or by professionals (Rehm, 1993; Kurtz & Ketcham, 1992; Ronel & Claridge, 1999), that the deliberate intensified practice of those attributes that direct one from self-centeredness and toward God-centeredness or other-centeredness can bring a personal spiritual transformation. It is also assumed – although further research is needed for confirmation – that an increase in the proportion of several attributes of spiritual intelligence in one's life may increase the proportion of other attributes as well, since the spiritual intelligence that lies beneath these attributes is a general, unified one.

Therapy or counseling may be useful in this developmental process of spiritual intelligence. Based on the concept of spiritual intelligence and the description of the various attributes, counseling may be seen as a process that assists one in recognizing and practicing spiritual intelligence in life. During counseling

people may be encouraged to engage in such a process, based on their willingness and intention. When individuals practice life as an agent for spiritual growth, they may achieve their full choice of human potential (Kass & Lenox, 2005; Pargament, 2007), which is an inspired aim of counseling.

The above conclusions about the possibility of self-evaluation and practice of spiritual intelligence and its development via counseling require further research. Such a study, based on experiential knowledge, could explore a wide range of expressions and additional attributes of spiritual intelligence, as well as subjective factors about its self-assessment and the conditions for its development during counseling.

Another issue yet to be explored is the social aspect of spiritual intelligence. The preliminary discussion of spiritual intelligence here focuses on the individual realm. What impact, if any, has spiritual intelligence on social order, community life, or culture? Kalo (1999b), for example, describes the horror of society and culture that turn their backs on the spiritual quest and that stress self-centeredness as a promising way of life. The culture of self-centeredness may lead to the "commoditization of human relationships," based on a wish for maximal gain and minimal loss. In contrast, the awakening of spiritual intelligence may lead to the humanization of relationships, including those that are initially defined as commercial. It is the awakening of a struggle towards the sanctification of relationships. The resulting social structure and what society should struggle towards are questions that demand further exploration.

NOTES

[1] Editor's note: For further inquiry and a more expanded discussion the reader is referred to Noble K.D. (2001). *Riding the windhorse: Spiritual intelligence and the growth of self*. Creskill, NJ: Hampton Press.

[2] "Shlomo Kalo was born in 1928, in Sofia, Bulgaria. When he was 12 years old, he joined an anti-Fascist underground in Bulgaria. Aged 15, under Nazi occupation, he was imprisoned in a concentration camp… Aged 18, he won a prize in a poetry competition and went to Prague, where he studied medicine and worked as a journalist… The sharp turn his life which occurred in the first week of 1969, is reflected, among others, in his writings. More than 60 titles of his were published in Israel, some of which were translated into English, French, Spanish, Italian, Polish, Greek, Malayalam, Bulgarian, Portuguese, Korean and more." (Retrieved on June 14, 2008, from http://www.y-dat.co.il/bio.htm.)

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