



Nelson Mandela and Unitive Leadership

August 2012 / Feature Articles

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Abstract

Nelson Mandela has become one of the most revered and recognized leaders in history. He is widely recognized for his forgiveness, compassion and humility and their considerable effects on his leadership and the success of anti-apartheid. Yet, surprisingly little deep analysis of Mandela's leadership exists today.

Analysis of Nelson Mandela's language and behavior using ego development theory suggests Mandela had reached a stage of unitive development. While Mandela was and is an exceptionally rare unitive leader, it is most surprising what is revealed of followers and observers of Mandela's leadership.

Characteristics assigned to Mandela are more aptly described as side effects and projections. Those characteristics are projections made by those with other than unitive perspectives rather than characteristics of Mandela.

What separates the leadership of Nelson Mandela from most is not the presence of lauded characteristics such as humility and forgiveness. It is the absence of the distinctions that make such characteristics possible in the first place. One cannot be humble if there are no distinctions to make one person better or more valuable than another. One cannot be humble if there are not but illusory distinctions separating people.

It is the absence of necessary distinctions and the concomitant relationship to understanding as illusion that allowed Mandela to include all South Africans in the creations of a new South Africa. The key to understanding Mandela's leadership role in the South African transition from apartheid to representative democracy is through the irony of understanding from a unitive perspective.

Roadmap to this Article

What follows is a summary of a larger, earlier study of Mandela's leadership. Much of what follows references that study and at times previously unreported data from that study. For instance, unitive persons other than Mandela were consulted in the course of the original study. Often their insights weren't reported yet are found to be helpful in this shortened context. Furthermore, such data may be used to explore territory left unexamined in the initial report.

While Cook-Greuter's ego-development model was used to initially assess Mandela's development, it will not be explained below nor will it be used to any great extent. Instead the idea of unitive development will be furthered as Cook-Greuter herself admitted that it was not clear that unitive development could be measured or explained. Only a basic understanding of developmental levels (organismic or contextual) is needed. No understanding of any specific model or

line is necessary.

Experience has shown that attempts to explain unitive development as will be done below most often lead to experiences of contradictions, paradoxes or ironies. Experience also dictates that if contradictions, paradox or irony are not experienced one is not looking towards experiences of unitive development but instead projecting understanding upon unitive development. Unitive development cannot be explained as something but is more aptly described as the lack of something.

In essence the first half of the article below is based on a very simple notion of unity in order to orient you to an experience of unity. Everything else is a means of examining that simplicity or showing how seeing it otherwise is a projection from other than unitive development. As such what follows is not best experienced as a linear report. It is more aptly described as tendrils shooting off from a center yet really all those tendrils are also contained in the center.

Introduction

It is a fact of the human condition that each shall, like a meteor, a mere brief passing moment in time and space, flit across the human stage and pass out of existence. Even the golden lads and lasses, as much as the chimney sweepers, come, and tomorrow are no more. After them all, they leave the people, enduring, multiplying, permanent, except to the extent that the same humanity might abuse its own genius to immolate life itself... We have come here to tell you, and through you, your own people, who are equally noble and heroic, of the troubles and trials, the fond hopes and aspirations, of the people from whom we originate. (Mandela "Address to the Joint Session of the Houses of Congress of the U.S.A." first and third paras.)

Nelson Mandela was not forgiving! It is always interesting to receive feedback to this previous statement, as forgiveness is perhaps the most lauded and recognized characteristic of Nelson Mandela. After all, Mandela was able to treat those that unjustly imprisoned him for 27 years with dignity and kindness. He went so far as to write the wife of one of his warders, imploring her to help her husband make more of himself as he clearly had the capacity to do so. If forgiveness is not a fitting description of Mandela, what is?

The answer lies in Mandela's unitive development. However, unitive development is usually described through other than a unitive lens and, as such, is a perspective from outside unitive development and inside other levels of development. As an example, the claim stated above is usually met with a few common statements and questions or derision. Often a reply is to an imagined suggestion Mandela was unforgiving. Occasionally someone agrees and explains Mandela's political pragmatism. Sometimes the reply is, "Well what was he then?"

That Mandela is not a man of forgiveness is a heuristic device. It is a sign that points to a territory in which the sign itself has little meaning. Unitive is both the sign and the territory but it is the irony that the sign ultimately points nowhere and everywhere that limits understanding of unitive development.

Reimagining Unitive Development

There is something ironic about delineating a stage of development in which boundaries and distinctions collapse. If with unitive development comes the loss of boundaries that delineate one thing from another (Cook-Greuter "Postautonomous Ego Development: A Study of Its Nature and Measurement"; Cook-Greuter "9 Levels of Increasing Embrace"; Koplowitz) then with unitive development comes the loss of unity as a meaningful distinction. It is therefore not surprising to observe that most observations of unitive development are not likely unitive themselves. Only from a non-unitive perspective could unity be

seen as meaningfully distinct from non-unity. In other words, from a unitive perspective there are no non-unitive perspectives. Even perspectives of non-unity themselves are of what cannot be other than a unity.

It is such irony that is the most difficult to handle through the partiality of understanding as any understanding would itself come from within what is a unity rather than transcend in order to understand the unity. For example, perspectives that all is reducible to physical matter and its interactions are ironic in that the observation as such would, if true, simply be expressions of physical reactions. It would not be knowledge per se because all is simply physical reactions including the “observation” that all is physical reactions. The expression of reductionism would merely be the manifestation of physical reactions rather than the observation of physical reactions.

Its truth, in other words, demands that it cannot be true in a way of thinking about it as the observation demands. The observers themselves are not subject to what is observed because seeing physical matters interactions must not simply be a physical reaction. It must transcend physical reactions in order to not simply be physical reactions. In turn it therefore suggests that all is not reducible to physical reactions. This paragraph, however, is not an argument for positivism’s or any other understanding’s erroneousness or inaccuracy. After all, how could we know as if it is true that it is not knowledge and if it is knowledge then it is not true?

Habermas observed of some postmodern perspectives such as relativism that partial perspectives were universalized, making them “performative contradictions” (85). If all is relative then so too is relativism. As such relativism cannot be universally applied. To begin demarcating a unitive relationship to knowledge it is perhaps more adept to observe of all knowledge that perspectives are not recursively applied to the knowledge and knowledge users themselves.

From a unitive experience, theories are not wrong for lacking recursive stability

in which the theory applied to the theory itself does not provide support. Instead they are all experienced as views from within a whole. For example, ask yourself what level of development your favorite developmental model comes from. In one case this question was asked of a group of Spiral Dynamics users. Quickly several replies claimed that the theory itself was from a yellow level of development. “What would it look like from a turquoise level of development”, was asked. The irony of the question slowly hit home and it quickly became clear that many participants identified with Spiral Dynamic’s truth. This is not to pick on Spiral Dynamics. If a developmental theory is a perspective of a developmental level (or a context in the case of contextual developmental theories) then the idea of a developmental model as truth begins to look like a Batesonian double bind (Bateson) or a koan. Universally applied the models themselves become subject to the model and are experienced as but an expression of humanity from within humanity.

However, the way of thinking portrayed in the last couple of paragraphs is akin to a pointing finger and perhaps demonstrative of what Cook-Greuter calls construct-aware development: the level just prior to unitive in her model. It represents an understanding of understanding’s irony but understanding is not yet something merely witnessed. Unitive development is more aptly described as transcending understanding to find that there is nothing to transcend. Framed as such, it is useful to consider any distinctions used to describe unitive experience a heuristic device or a road sign that points to territory in which the road sign is of little service. It may be further useful to consider what distinctions of unity delineate are side effects of a unitive experience and not terribly useful as observed characteristics. Unity is the experience and all other observed characteristics are projections and side effects of unitive experience.

Forgiveness and Unitive Development

If forgiveness were applied as a distinction to Nelson Mandela it would seem that he was a man of forgiveness. Mandela most certainly was angry and

resentful of the offenses of others at a time. Mandela also came to have little to no anger or resentment of others for those offenses at a later time. These two observations alone would seem to indicate forgiveness is an applicable distinction. From any non-unitive perspective it would be difficult to argue otherwise[i].

The difference suggested here is not in the passing of anger and resentment but in the unitive sense of what constitutes or rather does not constitute an individual. It is more descriptive to suggest that Mandela let go of his ideas of what constitutes an individual then he stopped being angry and resentful of individuals responsible for apartheid. Mandela certainly seemed to retain a degree of loathing for actions of the past, including his own. In one interview he said his own actions from the past were unforgivable (King). However he did not seem to attribute action to what others see as an individual.

Instead Mandela suggested that to change people the entire system needed to be changed. What is delineated with the term “person” cannot, from a unitive perspective, be said to be responsible for his or her own becoming. Their genes, for instance, are not of their choosing. Their experienced environment is not of their own choosing. The ground from which a person arises is not of the person's own making. The author of self cannot be self from a unitive experience. It becomes impossible to see any of the antecedent conditions creating a person to be the creation of the person him or herself. A person is a manifestation of the whole.

Mandela went so far as to suggest it would be a mistake to separate his self from the ANC (Rose). He did not say it would be a mistake to separate his ideas or actions from the ANC. He said it would be a mistake to separate his self from the ANC. Similarly, in some speeches he would address the crowd with the pronoun “we” where I was appropriate (Mandela “Address to the Joint Session of the Houses of Congress of the U.S.A.”; Mandela “Statement of the Deputy President of the African National Congress, Nelson Mandela, at the Parliament of the

Republic of Ireland”; Mandela “Address of the Deputy President of the African National Congress Nelson Mandela, at the European Parliament”). For example in accepting an award given to an individual he accepted as “we” (Mandela “Planet and Humanity: Address to the International Geographic Union Upon Receiving the Planet and Humanity Award”). In almost every instance examined in the study of Mandela, Mandela did not see himself as a responsible party for bringing about the end of apartheid. Instead he indicated he was a manifestation of apartheid and the fight against it.

It is, as such, impossible to create the conditions necessary for forgiveness from a unitive experience. One cannot be isolated in order to assess the initial blame necessary for forgiveness. The actions or events themselves may be assessed blame in a manner of speaking but even that action or event would not be observed as causal per se (Koplowitz). Any event has antecedent events that bring about further events and actions. There is a flow rather than separable actions and events. Blame, as such, is an event itself that leads to further events.

Attributing forgiveness to Mandela, from a unitive experience, is not an incorrect or wrong perspective, however. For lack of a better explanation, forgiveness is a perspective from what could not be called unitive although from a unitive experience even forgiveness is of a unity. The sense that there is an isolatable responsible party is not a perspective that could be called unitive. In other words, what is projected to be forgiveness in the case of Mandela is the lack of experienced, meaningful distinctions necessary for forgiveness.

In fact forgiveness is not an often-used term in Mandela’s writings and speeches. For example, in his second autobiography (Mandela *Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela*) he did not once use the terms forgive or forgiveness^[ii]. In nearly 1200 electronically collected speeches and interviews of Nelson Mandela only 19 examples of the uses of forgive or forgiveness were found. Not once was a plea for forgiveness levied. Not once was forgiveness expressed as a desired characteristic.

Instead, Mandela does at times seem to reference, again for lack of a better term, the constructed nature of the boundaries around forgiveness. For instance he talks about the spirit of forgiveness rather than forgiveness. One quote widely attributed to Mandela is: “If there are dreams about a beautiful South Africa, there are also roads that lead to their goal. Two of these roads could be named Goodness and Forgiveness.” He does not suggest they are forgive or forgiveness. He suggests that forgiveness is something others call one of those roads.

Unitive Experience and Witnessing

To this point “unitive experience” has often been used in place of “unitive development” or “unitive perspective.” The reason is twofold. In the first place the idea of a unitive perspective is misleading. Where a perspective demands demarcation, delineation and distinction the unitive experience is devoid of them except that their use may still be witnessed as they too arise from a unity. The unitive experience is better described as experienced absence than the presence of anything that can be made distinct[iii]. Ideas of a unitive perspective or a distinct unitive level are better represented as non-unitive perspectives themselves.

Secondly it should be noted that most have likely experienced unity no different than what is being described as unitive development here (Cook-Greuter “Mature Ego Development: A Gateway to Ego Transcendence”; Maslow; Wilber). Wilber observes that such state experiences can become more common traits. However, most reconstruct such unitive experiences through more normal and less ephemeral modes of existence in order to fit dominant mental models (Cook-Greuter “Mature Ego Development: A Gateway to Ego Transcendence”).

The reverse, so to speak, is also true. It is unlikely that anyone has the experience of unity all the time. However in the experience of complete unity a person still exhibits behaviors, language and the use of distinctions. However, those distinctions, language and action no longer exhibit a willed focus.

Unitive individuals have reported the experience of witnessing self[iv] speak, think or act without any conscious will to do so (O'Fallon). Cook-Greuter reports unitive individuals nonjudgmentally witnessing their own feelings, behaviors and thoughts ("Postautonomous Ego Development: A Study of Its Nature and Measurement" 94) Actions, thoughts and behaviors are experienced as arising from the whole and are not the willed intention of an individual.

The person in question will seem much like they did in the past and from earlier levels of development. There is still a body, behaviors, etc. The tendrils of the past still inform a person's actions. An action is not unitive per se except that from a unitive experience it cannot be but unitive. With unity comes the loss of desire to be one way or another (Cook-Greuter "9 Levels of Increasing Embrace" 34) and there is no separate self that wills actions into existence. Instead there is an experience of witnessing, which is to say that self may be a witnessed experience. Self is illusory but may still be a witnessed experience (Cook-Greuter "9 Levels of Increasing Embrace"). In other words the expressions of self as the willed intentions of an individual is not part of a unitive experience except that it too may be witnessed.

As such, it seems more adequate to observe that unitive development cannot be characterized. It is not the action that determines unity but the orientation towards any action, knowledge etc. If the action etc. is witnessed, which is to say without willed focus, it is likely unitive. The actions themselves however may be adjuvant effects of unitive experiences on non-unitive experience. The aforementioned reconstructions of unitive experiences may act to change the behaviors, thinking and affect of non-unitive actions.

Most reconstructions of the unitive experience come with hagiographic, mystical, transcendent or other superlative connotations. For example, Scott says of unitive development: "There are individuals reputed to have lived with access to this higher level, such as Jesus and Buddha" (p. 63). From non-unitive experiences there is a tenancy to project some form of greatness upon a unitive

individual. Unitive experiences seem to be desirable for earlier levels of development. Rather than seeking unitive experience, however, it is more likely that the projections of unitive experiences are sought as with the unitive experience comes the sense that everything is already unitive. From a non-unitive perspective unity is other than what is. A unitive individual does not experience pain and suffering as other than unitive. There is nowhere to search for the unitive experience. Instead, from non-unity, people (remembering that even unitive individuals experience non-unitive levels of development) likely seek external unity. The effects of unitive experience (wholeness) bring many to seek wholeness and unity in the “external” world, not realizing it is already there.

It is interesting to note that there may be up to 2,000,000 unitive people in the US alone (Cook-Greuter “9 Levels of Increasing Embrace” 5). Perhaps there are forty to fifty million people akin to the Buddha and Christ on the planet at any given time. It seems more likely evidence that we are observing the “conscious, willed focus and preoccupations of other (non-unitive) adult stages” (parenthetical statement mine, Cook-Greuter “9 Levels of Increasing Embrace” 34). It seems more likely that unitive people mostly go unrecognized[v]. In part they likely go unrecognized, as their behaviors and language do not fit within the projections of others. Pain and other less than pleasant experiences do not go away and bliss is not a 24/7 experience. There would seem to be no particular reason that a unitive person could not exhibit anger, pain, and even actions others find reprehensible. Unitive individuals have no greater knowledge or understanding than anyone else. Unitive individuals are likely to be recognized only when extraordinary circumstances make them recognizable to the projections of others. Under those circumstances the experience of unity may result in a person to which others can project their useful characteristics upon.

Mandela: A Unitive Leader?

Mandela would seem to be an example in which extraordinary circumstances led to a unitive person becoming a leader. It is unlikely that unitive persons

would become a leader as they are often found to be aloof and “not enough engaged in the goals, pursuits, concerns of common humanity” (Cook-Greuter “9 Levels of Increasing Embrace” 33) by others at earlier levels of development. Mandela certainly showed a kind of aloofness that would likely have resulted in his ouster had “followers” not been able to reframe his aloofness into recognizably laudable actions and characteristics such as forgiveness, political pragmatism, humility or saintliness.

For example, Mandela chastised the ANC Executive Committee for voting to reject the pre-democracy national anthem, Die Stem, for their preferred anthem, Nkosi Sikele even before coming into power. He told the executive committee:

This song that you treat so easily holds the emotions of many people who you don't represent yet. With the stroke of a pen, you would take a decision to destroy the very – the only – basis that we are building upon: reconciliation. (Carlin, Playing the Enemy: Nelson Mandela and the Game That Made a Nation, 147)

Reconciliation is the process of making two sides compatible. It is not about the concerns of one side or the other. In fact reconciliation cannot be about one side or the other or it is not reconciliation but rather assimilation or indoctrination. For his part, Mandela rarely seemed concerned with the goals, pursuits and concerns of either side except when imagined that one side sought reconciliation and the other did not. In fact he often seemed to work to destroy imagined “sides” by challenging imagined distinctions as he did above.

Another useful example is Mandela’s speech to the nation upon the assassination of Chris Hani. Hani was a revered young leader of the ANC. Many felt Hani was the second most popular leader of the ANC (Sampson 461). It was

also observed that Hani drew even larger crowds than Mandela when speaking (Richman and Johnson ~23:00).

At least seventy people died in the protests and riots that immediately followed Hani's assassination (Lodge *Mandela: A Critical Life* 180-81). Mandela, however, was able to contain the violence by challenging the thoughts behind the violence and protests and, at the same time, the violence that killed Hani.

In a televised speech to the nation Mandela began with:

Tonight I am reaching out to every single South African, Black and White, from the very depth of my being. A White man, full of prejudice and hate, came to our country and committed a deed so foul that our whole nation now teeters on the brink of disaster. A White woman, of Afrikaner origin, risked her life so that we may know, and bring to justice, this assassin.
(Asmal, Chidester and James, 471)

Prejudice and hate were responsible for Hani's death and were also responsible for violent responses to Hani's death. Prejudice and hate demand the maintenance of meaningful distinctions such as white and black as constitutive of something much more than skin color.

White, Black, African, Afrikaner, Coloured, etc. not only hold little meaning outside of skin color or lineage but they are not readily apparent as even superficial distinction. White to black appears to be a spectrum for instance and, if science is to be believed, it would seem that the lineage of us all leads back to Africa. We are all African if we are unwilling to find meaningful distinctions in time. Some simply have fewer generations between them and African habitation. It is not that social and geographic contexts are the same or that experiences from within the various contexts are the same but rather that any perspective of them and separating them is, to borrow from Luhmann

(*Social Systems*), a reduction in complexity and a view from within. Any distinction is a projection from a unitive experience and as such, it is not that they are not different per se but their division from others is illusory.

Mandela, it seems, was operating not from meaning but rather sought to bring about the demise of meaning in a manner of speaking. One could say that he did it for a reason such as to end suffering, violence, etc. and seeking certain ends. Certainly much of what Mandela said and wrote would indicate that was the case. However, two perspectives are necessary to move forward.

Roles

First, Mandela, from an experience of unity, was playing a role history had written for him. It was not the willed focus of an individual intent upon specific outcomes that had Mandela speak of hate and violence in an attempt to bring sides together. It is more aptly described as losing the illusion of control. From a unitive experience one no longer imagines they are steering and dictating direction. Instead it is more useful to see it as a surrender of self to the flow that ongoingly creates and directs a person.

Mandela spoke of roles that others would more commonly identify. Mandela reported he did not consider himself a peacemaker or a unifier but instead saw them as roles to be played (Mandela *Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela* 488). Mandela certainly did not seem to identify with being president either. He had to be coerced into becoming president (Mandela *Conversations with Myself*) and he left after only one term despite wild popularity. Unlike so many leaders he did not seek to maintain his position of power.

Was Mandela simply playing a role when he sought to end the violence in the aftermath of Hani's assassination? Was he simply an actor that "flit across the human stage" (Mandela "Address to the Joint Session of the Houses of Congress of the U.S.A.")? Cook-Greuter ("Postautonomous Ego Development: A Study of

Its Nature and Measurement”) observes of unitive persons:

They consistently maintain an awareness of their thoughts, feelings, behavior, perceptions and states of alertness, not just experience them occasionally. They have become, primarily, non-judgmental witnesses to their own being-becoming. They can observe the many roles they, secondarily, play out on the stage of life. (p. 94)

Mandela observed roles, thoughts, feelings, behaviors, perceptions and states. They were aspects of roles played and manifested from a whole.

Others observed Mandela to present a false self in order to bring about a desired end (Carlin *Playing the Enemy: Nelson Mandela and the Game That Made a Nation*; Sheckels; Sampson; Ivy). Lodge (*Mandela: A Critical Life; Politics in South Africa: From Mandela to Mbeki*; “Nelson Mandela: Political Saint for a New Democracy”) observed Mandela wore masks. Mandela’s use of third-person voice, for instance, was a “significant indication of Mandela’s own consciousness of inventing a public identity and acting out a heroic role” (Lodge *Mandela: A Critical Life* 189). From a unitive experience it is more likely Mandela was acting out a role but that the inventor of his public identity was not Mandela. Mandela simply had no identity invested in his own identity. Self was something witnessed. It was the projections of others that helped to dictate the role Mandela played.

Furthermore, masks and pragmatism are more aptly seen as projections. The same is true of Mandela’s humility, forgiveness or any other characteristic that one could apply to Mandela. Mandela was not a unity from a unitive perspective and so nothing could be attributed to Mandela.

No Distinction Creates a Unity

Secondly and perhaps most importantly, no distinction can be used to create a distinct unity. The idea of using unitive development to make distinct Nelson Mandela or his leadership is itself an irony. No person displays only one level of development (Cook-Greuter “Postautonomous Ego Development: A Study of Its Nature and Measurement”). One level of development cannot be used to show a distinct individual. It is unlikely Mandela was always having a unitive experience and some of his actions are likely more aptly described through the lenses of other developmental levels.

In fact, one need only read the myriad arguments as to what constitutes an individual or self to see the ephemeral, blurred boundaries of self offered (See for example Ashmore and Jussim; Leary and Tangey; Roberts; Sedikides and Brewer). While some may argue that development should not be used to put a person in a box the very idea of a person seems a box itself. The act of seeing a person is the creation of a box and seemingly the nature of humanity.

Any distinction is the difference between what is made distinct and what it is not (Luhmann “System as Difference”). To be individual one must be distinct from others. An individual is made distinct by what others are not and as such dependent upon what others are in order to be individual. A unity is not found in a distinct thing or characteristic alone but also in the distinction of what it is not and the observation as such: any perspective is a view from within. The idea of unity as a distinction demands its distinction from non-unity, for example. A story of Mandela also has to include what he is not. A story of leadership has to include followership. A story of Mandela as a leader needs to include the ground that created him as a leader.

Context and Mandela’s Rise

From a unitive perspective or from the perspective of a unitive leader it would follow that it is not so much the person that matters as the context in which the leader comes to be a leader so much as there is no individual willed focus to do

anything in particular. The unitive leader observes their being/becoming in what is a unity. Furthermore, as mentioned above it is unlikely that a unitive individual would rise to position of leadership except under extraordinary circumstances. Mandela had such circumstances.

By the early 80's Mandela had been in prison for more than fifteen years. His letters and correspondence with the outside world had been severely restricted. Letters would often not be sent or received and when they were large sections were sometimes blacked out. It was illegal to publicly speak of Mandela or redistribute his past speeches or writings that had been smuggled out of prison. As a result, Mandela became a forgotten man outside of prison. Despite no significant change in policy, rules or laws regarding Mandela, he again became widely recognized leader in the late 1980's.

It was not Mandela's actions that brought him to prominence but a concerted effort by the ANC to create Mandela as the symbol of anti-apartheid. The ANC Free Mandela campaign of the late 80's and 90's was used to personalize anti-apartheid. It put a face to the movement by choosing to make Mandela a lone symbol of heroism, sacrifice and power so often exhibited by many on both sides of the imagined racial divide fighting apartheid. By Mandela's own recognition, "They deliberately decided to use me in order to mobilize the organization and the international community (King)."

The benefit of using a censored prisoner was that they were not publicly available. They could not make statements or publicly act in ways discordant with the created persona. They were not forced to make everyday human decisions that could be scrutinized. Furthermore, it was difficult to criticize a man who offered to die for his fellow people's freedom. In almost any culture it is heroic to do so. In addition even the actions of the apartheid South African Government that so strictly censored and hid Mandela increased his symbolic power. Surely any individual the government found so powerful as to prevent them from having almost all interactions with the outside world must be

powerful.

The campaign, however, was vague, offering few concrete attributes to say why Mandela was a great leader. Afrikaner poet and anti-apartheid participant Antjie Krog (2005) described perspectives of Mandela as: “It felt as if you knew everything about him but you realized you really knew nothing (312).” In essence the campaign was such that people could project what attributes they cared to upon the hidden leader of the ANC without any real evidence the projection was applicable.

Soon Mandela found himself the adopted symbolic leader of many South African antiapartheid groups. The United Democratic Front in South Africa, for instance was found to have promoted the “cult of charismatic leadership around Nelson Mandela (Lodge “The United Democratic Front” 213).” Mandela also found himself the symbolic leader of many liberation movements. He became the hero pitted against a generic oppressive system. Mandela’s life had become a “communicative tool that allowed apartheid to be narrated through the hardships of an individual person (Lahusen 149).”

The Mandela symbol became almost ridiculously hagiographic. New York Mayor Richard Dinkins called him “a modern day Moses leading the people of South Africa out of enslavement” (Nixon 187). Poet Sipho Sepamla wrote:

*I need today oh so very badly
Nelson Mandela
Out of the prison gates
to walk broad-shouldered –among counsel
Down commissioner
up West street
and lead us away from the shadow
of impotent word weavers
his clenched fist hoisted higher than hope*

for all of us to see and follow. (in Meer, vii)

Peter Mokaba said in a speech commemorating Mandela's release from prison:

Comrade president, here are your people, gathered to pay tribute to their messiah, their savior whom the apartheid regime failed dismally to silence. These are the comrades and the combatants that fought tooth and nail in the wilderness... they toiled in the valley of darkness and now that their messiah and savior is released, they want to be shown the way to freedom. (Lodge Politics in South Africa: From Mandela to Mbeki 11)

In short, Mandela became a saint before performing any miracles. He was a man distinctly different than he was before prison and yet any concrete data to support the messianic projection would almost entirely be from his pre-prison self. The messiah was a projection: the creation of a directed campaign to create a symbol. And, as suggested above it is unlikely that without projecting characteristics upon the unitive man that walked out of the prison gates he would have ever ascended to leadership. He certainly did not seem inclined to take it even when offered.

Of course there are many other factors that contributed to Mandela's rise to formal leadership. They will not be discussed here but suffice it to say that a dizzying array of events were necessary to create the conditions in which Mandela could become president as well as the person who became president.

Mandela was perfect for the role. Without the need to be anything in particular he merely fulfilled the role created for him. Without the need for power he was unwilling to grab onto the almost unlimited power offered to him. Others such as Mugabe hung onto his power and became a tyrant. Mandela walked away after only one term.

Even his protestations against the hagiographic projections were met with superlatives. He was then humble, increasing his saintliness. However, like forgiveness, humility is not an applicable distinction from a unitive experience as there are no means in which to compare individuals. Mandela's unitive development allowed others to project meaning where Mandela likely had none.

It would seem that people did not follow Mandela per se but their own golden projections. All that people found worthy could be followed and as such they followed not Mandela but their own greatness. Mandela was but a catalyst and his unitive leadership story is one of leadership without a leader.

Mandela's Leadership

In short it begins to appear as if Mandela simply acted as a catalyst to bring disparate peoples together and break down somewhat ironic, observed distinctions such that people's goodness could arise. Mandela negotiated with the apartheid government while in prison but that negotiation was merely for formal negotiations with the ANC and other anti-apartheid organizations. He was forwarding little more than bringing sides together. Mandela did not much participate in the formal negotiations. He did not dictate the direction of negotiations outside of the participation of all parties and eventual voting rights of all peoples. He appointed imagined enemies and friends to government posts. He brought even separatist and right wing parties to participate in elections. He was relieved when the ANC was not voted as sufficient plurality to dictate the direction of government, instead feeling it better to always include other voices.

In more conventional terms the success of negotiations, the creation of a new democratic government and the success of anti-apartheid cannot be attributed to Mandela. For instance it was most likely the work of lead negotiators, Cyril Ramaphosa and Roelf Meyers that was most responsible for negotiations' eventual success (Spitz and Chaskalson 13-14; Waldmeir 211-13). Both were

punished for the success. Each had to argue for the aspects of their opponent's positions. They were often resented for giving away too much in negotiations. Neither worked in the political arena again (Spitz and Chaskalson 421). Mandela, on the other hand was able to stand above the fray and come out clean.

Staying above the fray was essential for Mandela's role however. He could not be seen as directly advocating for one side against the other yet he had to be seen as advocating for something just and good from all sides. People needed to be able to reframe his actions to their own particular way of seeing such that those actions were admirable.

As mentioned above he worked to break down people's prejudice and prejudice was rampant on all sides. Horrors were enacted on all sides due to prejudice due to imagined attributes assigned to races or peoples. The horrors visited on Blacks and other "minorities" by apartheid are well documented. Less recognized are the horrors enacted by anti-apartheid supporters. For example, those, often Black, charged with supporting whites, without trial, sometimes had fuel filled tires placed over their heads to be lit on fire. Atrocities, hate, prejudice and anger could not be said unique characteristics of any group.

It is not difficult to see the whole of the sides as an autopoietic social system in which the product of the system is the system itself (Luhmann *Social Systems*). The violence and other actions viewed in a negative light to one side beget violence and other actions viewed in a negative light by the other side. The prejudice of one side resulted in prejudice on the other side. Each reaction fed the reaction of the other and back again.

Mandela for his part as a unitive leader broke down the distinctions necessary for the emotions and thoughts necessary for recurring violence and discrimination. He did not, however, reframe for others. Unable to see or identify with distinctions he somewhat simply and tangentially challenged those distinctions as he did when he wore the hated jersey of the South African rugby team at the rugby world cup held in South Africa. This somewhat simple

gesture was seen to bring a nation together if only for a time (Carlin *Playing the Enemy: Nelson Mandela and the Game That Made a Nation*).

It seems clear that these tactics would not have worked with any other even unitive individual. In the case of Chris Hani's assassination mentioned above even Mandela's Rival and South African president of the time, Fredrick Willem De Klerk, thought that no one but Mandela could have calmed the nation and prevented a renewal of violence. What made it all possible was not just Mandela's unitive development. It was equally the hagiographic, symbolic Mandela created.

The unitive persons consulted in the initial study suggested that most found direct reports of their unitive experience disturbing. Also their actions were often found to display a lack of shared concern with others. It was just as likely their actions and thoughts would be reframed in a negative light as in a positive light. It seems clear that sans his hagiographic standing Mandela would not so universally have had his actions reframed in a positive light. Another who would have similarly challenged the energy of a movement with an assassinated revered leader may have found themselves with a burning tire around their neck.

Summary

It would not be a unitive perspective that separates Mandela's leadership from his followership. Not only were others responsible for many of the heroic and laudable actions demonstrably necessary for ending of apartheid but followers also projected their own greatness upon Mandela. They followed their own golden shadow, their hopes for the greatness they could see in a nation if only freed from the distinctions that cast such an oppressive shadow on all. It was not just Blacks that were freed from the oppression of apartheid but those responsible for maintaining apartheid as well.

It would not be a unitive perspective to separate Mandela's leadership from the conditions that created it including the intentional creation of a symbolic individual leader of the movement. A bewildering series of events was necessary to create the circumstances in which Mandela could become president. Prison allowed Mandela to develop and it allowed for the necessary secrecy for pre-negotiations for which Mandela was given so much credit. Internal strife between exiles and "inziles" created the necessity for a compromise leader that narrowed the field to Mandela and Mandela (Gevisser). Even the myriad events necessary for Mandela to become a recognized leader cannot be separated from one another as each can be seen as caused and cause.

It would not be a unitive perspective to separate Mandela from the ground that created him including his royal upbringing, his genes, apartheid and friends. Walter Sisulu, for example, gently guided Mandela's early political career through challenges that may have ended Mandela's leadership before it began (Carlin "Interview: Adelaide Tambo"). It would not be a unitive perspective to see Mandela as separate from all the great leaders of South Africa that came before him. In short, it would not be a unitive perspective to see Mandela as something in particular.

Mandela's unique unitive capacities allowed him not to be trapped by the distinctions so ensconced in the identity of a nation. He did not see or identify with what most did. Mandela was a catalyst, not a leader if looked at from a unitive experience.

Feedback to Feedback

Feedback to the above observations often includes a somewhat hesitant question: "Uh, how is that useful for most leaders?" The flippant but most useful answer is that the answer is everyone's to find. There are infinite possible answers and they should not be restricted. If looked at through the lens of developmental levels, for instance, it would seem that each level would have its

own kind of answers or rebukes.

However, something like answers can be offered. In one case in which the above findings were reported a gentle elderly man offered, "Without belief we have nothing." While it was unclear exactly what message he found in the report he never the less did not seem to experience the absolute liberation that can be found in nothing. Perhaps he experienced nothing as the absence of all while from a unitive experience it is the loss of experienced boundaries and an oppressing need to see boundaries as well as the overwhelming fullness of all when freed of observed boundaries.

The previous paragraph is not a plea for unitive development or anything in particular. Instead what follows is an offered reframe of ignorance. The loss of observed distinctions and boundaries frees one from the hold of past ways of thinking and feeling. One need only watch the somewhat infantile politics of the US to see how knowing is the enemy of furthering ourselves. Intransigent sides that see only the value of their own perspectives and goals cannot be but at odds with any other perspectives and goals. Compromise becomes nothing more than partial battles won and lost. Ignorance is highly overlooked as a virtue while knowing may be the ultimate tyranny.

To look or see in a new way we must lose old ways of seeing. Ignorance is a way of not seeing so that new ways of seeing may arise. To create, something must be destroyed and let go (Smith and Berg). Ignorance is at the base of both. It is freedom from what is and yet ignorance does not mean one cannot use current knowledge. Instead it is a hesitant relationship to current knowledge and ways of seeing the world.

How exciting would it be to have a leader say they did not know the way forward, only that we needed to figure it out together. Instead of offering how things should be done they would look to lose distinctions that prevented furthering ourselves such that we could figure it out together. How exciting would it be to have a leader that need not have power or knowledge? How

exciting would it be to have a leader that could find service in leaving power.

Often people feel uncomfortable seeing Mandela in the presented light. Most often they have difficulties not seeing Mandela invested in what they find so valuable like compassion, humility and forgiveness. Here it is offered that Mandela is better seen as surrendering self to something much larger than himself.

In a manner of speaking he was the ultimate servant leader. Theories of servant leadership most often reveal that service is to the servant leaders own ideas of what service is (Greenleaf). Mandela cast himself adrift and let the current take him.

Servant leadership is often mischaracterized. Being of service may be an egoic concern of a servant leader as service is reframed to fit ego's perspectives of what needs to occur. Service is not to another but to one's sense of what is of service. One need cast self on the current and let go to be of service to anything but ego.

One question often asked is how one can become unitive. What are the practices that bring about a unitive consciousness? There are no authorities on such practices associated with this research. The author of this article is not a spiritual person and such an answer would seem to be within the purview of spirituality for most. That said it seems there can be no such practice in a manner of speaking. If one thinks it is other than what already is they are facing an impossible barrier to unitive consciousness as from unitive consciousness all already is unitive and there is no such barrier.

Finally it should be said that what is offered is not meant to be of use. It is a report of findings that seem novel. This author has no sense of how it should be used or not used. It is simply offered with all its apparent contradictions, paradoxes and ironies. I would not even defend it as true or begrudge anyone their opinions of it.

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[i] Some have tangentially argued Mandela was not a man of forgiveness by suggesting political pragmatism demanded actions suggestive of forgiveness T. Lodge, Politics in South Africa: From Mandela to Mbeki (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), T. Lodge, Mandela: A Critical Life (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[ii] An electronic copy of his autobiography was searched using the find function. No examples of forgive or forgiveness were found.

[iii] It should be noted that absence could just as easily be replaced with wholeness. The absence of boundaries also brings about a universal wholeness. The absence of anything is also the presence of an indistinguishable whole.

[iv] “Themselves” is used in order to meet nominative case requirements of the English language but the term is not clearly applicable in the case of unitive experience. Even self is experienced as an illusory distinction.

[v] It is also likely that people may appear unitive that are not as they act in accordance with projections of unitive development without the underlying conditions.

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Shawn O’Fallon, PhD,



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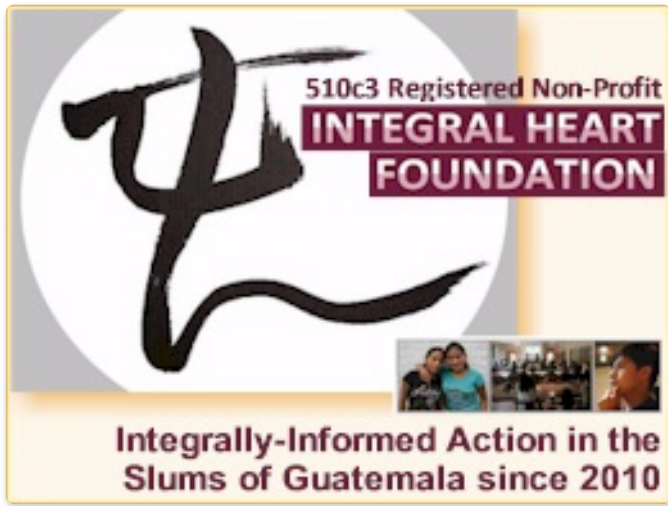
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Thank you, Alia! Profound gratefulness to Colin Wilson is something that we share. I would be very happy to read that summary of yours if you ever decide to write it down!

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Thanks Robin Lincoln Wood and Otto Laske for this excellent interview. You both made my day.

Rev. Alia Aurami on 05/31 – Colin Wilson: Collected Essays on Philosophers - 06/01/2018

Ah, thank you Eugene for calling more attention to Colin Wilson and exploring the relationship of his thinking to Integral Theory. I've been experiencing the upliftment you point to, from his views, since the mid-80s. I resonate strongly with the questions he explores as a philosopher, and the places he's willing to go in those explorations. He was a great influence on me in my younger years, and I am profoundly grateful for him and for all those who helped bring him to the attention of the world. At one point I wanted to write a survey and summary of some of his thoughts, but so far I haven't done that. I recall especially loving his autobiography. Thank you again!

Eugene Pustoshkin on 05/31 – Colin Wilson: Collected Essays on Philosophers - 06/01/2018

Thank you!

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