

The Heart is the Key to All of This



Conversation with Joseph Jaworski
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Claus Otto Scharmer¹

C.O. Scharmer: Joseph, what underlying question does your work address and what elements in your life gave rise to that question?

Joseph Jaworski: The underlying question has to do with learning based on a fundamentally different mode of cognition. The underlying question is **how can we sense and actualize emerging futures?** I have a deep belief that the human capacity includes the ability to sense and actualize what wants to happen before it manifests. I've been grappling with that question for over two decades. How did this begin? It was a long time coming for me. Most of the experiences that led me into this were experiences of **collapsing boundaries between me and others**, even me and animals. That has led me directly into this path.

I. Collapsing Boundaries: Some Early Experiences

COS: When was the first time that you experienced such a collapse of boundaries?

Joseph Jaworski: The first time was with horses.

COS: Really? When was that?

¹ The conversation with Joseph Jaworski took place as part of a global interview project with 25 eminent thinkers on knowledge and leadership. The project was sponsored by McKinsey & Company and the Society for Organizational Learning (formerly the MIT Center for Organizational Learning). The interviews and the summary paper are accessible as free downloads from www.dialogonleadership.org.

Joseph Jaworski: Well, it was probably even before that. When I was very young, like eight or nine, I had very intimate experiences with young girls. I don't mean in a sexual sense at all, it was just in being with them, a couple of girls in particular. It was definitely a collapsing of boundaries, but I didn't know what to call it then.

When I was around twelve I began working with horses, either riding them or just being with them. As I look back on that I recognize that again, there was a collapsing of boundaries between me and the horse. Many years later I understood more about this from a woman named Molly. She was an Olympian equestrian, and I used to ride with her when I was a practicing lawyer in London. She confided in me that the secret to her success was this capacity to communicate with her horse in a way that was completely different. She ultimately wrote a book called *Thinking Riding*, but I don't think she was as explicit in the book as she was with me in conversation. **It clearly involved this realm of the boundaries blurring between the rider and the horse through some kind of non-physical cues.**

COS: So how would she do it?

Joseph Jaworski: She just went into it, she just did it. It was a state of different awareness that she had that was a God-given thing to her.

During my first year of college I was at Baylor University in Waco. A tornado came through the town. I didn't know what it was; I just heard this frightening sound like a thousand freight trains. When I walked outside there was massive devastation everywhere. I walked about three blocks down to where the tornado hit. A building that was one block square and six stories high had collapsed. For three days and three nights people, and later the army, came to help pull out the people who were buried in this rubble. There was this sense of self-organization and distributed leadership. People seemed to know what to do without talking about it. There was that same sense of a sort of collapse of boundaries, of nonverbal communication. That was an experience that was just filled with horror, but in another way it was such a special feeling that you wanted to recreate that over your lifetime. It's hard to talk about something like that.

COS: Yes, but I know what you mean.

“Don't worry, Jaybo, I'll get you out of this.”

Joseph Jaworski: The next time it occurred was in another crisis. I was about nineteen, and a very close friend and I were out at my father and mother's ranch. We were driving a jeep in an open field and the jeep hit a huge boulder that was hidden by the grass. The jeep flipped over and fell on top of me. My friend Mike was thrown out. I was literally being crushed to death. The whole front end of that jeep was

resting on my chest, and just my head was sticking out. Mike looked into my eyes and I looked into his, and you know, there was that complete oneness or unity between the two of us. He said, “Don’t worry, Jaybo, I’ll get you out of this.” He weighed 135 pounds, and he picked up this thing that weighed a ton. I think he found the strength in that experience of oneness.

When I was out of law school, I had these experiences many times as a trial lawyer. They happened most often in a litigation when there was a lot at stake — when I was on the side of right, and felt that I was battling on the side of justice against great injustice. I was very young, I was in my twenties. I was given, in one particular situation, the opportunity to handle some cases that at first seemed to be losers, and it was good experience. I had great empathy for the people and ended up in many instances winning huge awards for them.

Becoming One With Your Client

One case was called “Prather versus Union City Transfer.” Prather was a young man with two children and a beautiful wife. He had risen to the level of tool-pusher in the oil field, which meant that he was *the* boss of the whole crew that was drilling for oil. He was a wonderful man. He was a Cajun from a little town called Ville Platte, deep in the swamps of southern Louisiana. He was disassembling this huge rig. Have you ever been around an oil rig?

COS: No, I haven’t.

Joseph Jaworski: They are just massive. It’s scary to see these huge derricks. And at some point you have to take them down. They disassemble them with giant cranes. They were taking these huge derricks apart and putting them on the back of these gigantic flatbed trucks, and moving them to a new location. These trucks have about forty wheels, like nothing you’ve ever seen. A large wench that was pulling this derrick up on this truck got stuck. The truck was owned by Union City Transfer, and the oil company that was drilling was the employer of Jude Prather. Anyway, Jude went underneath it try to correct what was happening. The driver of the truck started the winch up while he was underneath it, and the derrick fell and cut him in two. He lived for about six hours. He was in the hospital and his wife and children were there watching him die.

The transfer company took the position that he was negligent in getting underneath there. This case had been filed and it sat around the office for years, because everybody thought it couldn’t be won. I was just out of law school they gave me this as something to sort of cut my teeth on. I went into the library and spent days and days trying to figure this out. I came up with this theory of last clear chance. It’s very technical, but it was not something that was in the Texas law. It was in Louisiana law, and this case was a Texas case. To cut a long story short, we got that law domiciled in

the state of Texas and were able to use the doctrine of last clear chance to create liability on this transfer company. That was exceedingly hard to do, it had never happened before. The law of last clear chance says that the man driving that truck was the one that had the last clear chance to avert this accident. Jude Prather may have been negligent going underneath there. But the man who had the last clear chance to avoid the accident was the man looking out the window who engaged that transmission. We won a huge amount of money for Virginia Prather and her children.

When I was in the library studying day and night trying to figure something out to help her, I had some of these experiences of collapsing boundaries. I was concentrating so deeply on this that it was like a meditative experience, and I was in a place that I had capacities that I didn't normally have. I felt so aligned with her. To this moment, I feel it right now. I felt at one with her, and even with Jude. This even happened in the courtroom with witnesses. If you remember the way Bill Russell described these moments in *Second Wind*, it is exactly what I'm trying to describe. I was actually seeing things and operating in a capacity for a young person that was higher than you normally would. There was even a blurring of boundaries between me and the opposing counsel and the judge and the jury. I was just one year out of law school, and so was my other partner. The men that were trying this case against us were in their sixties. When we won the case and got a huge jury verdict, they were just shocked, they just could not believe this had happened.

Dancing With Ermine

This phenomenon doesn't always occur over something important. I was probably 35 or 38, and in the early stages of the transformational journey I wrote about in *Synchronicity* when I went out in the wilderness in the winter time. You normally don't go backpacking in the winter time. One other person went out, a guide photographer. It was very solitary, and I just loved it. At one point I was all alone out there, and this ermine appeared, and she put on an act for me. She started turning flips and jumping in different ways and then would stop and look at me, as if to say, now what did you think about that? And I would nod and smile and then she would do it again. This was out in the middle of nowhere, just a wild ermine. That must have gone on for a long time, it seemed like ten minutes. Finally she gave me one last look and went back down under the snow and I never saw her again. It was very much like these other experiences. I felt a complete oneness with this animal. Jumping ahead, since we're talking about that, I've had that same experience with flowers in the wilderness.

COS: Really?

Encountering The Being Of Flowers

Joseph Jaworski: Yes. It's a little different but it's that same feeling. I was up on the top of a mountain near the tree line, where all the vegetation goes away because you're so high. I was at 13,000 feet. They were the most beautiful colors I've ever seen. I was transfixed by these little flowers, and had this same feeling of dropping way down, like when you're meditating, into another level.

I also had this feeling in the wilderness skiing with my son at times. Not always; when there's a big crowd it would never happen. But one time in Utah he and I decided to get up before anybody. We went up with the ski patrol. We were the first people up there, and it had snowed the night before and there was powder about three feet deep. It was early in the morning and the light was just coming through these tall trees. There was ice everywhere and it was glistening, and it was just magical. We were just drifting through this powder. It was the same feeling; I felt this deep oneness.

COS: Oneness with?

Joseph Jaworski: Oneness with nature and the whole world. And with Joey, too. Then your consciousness expands even beyond all of that.

COS: We are now in your late 30s or 40s, right?

Joseph Jaworski: Late 30s, early 40s.

COS: Would these kind of experiences happen, say, on an everyday basis to you? Or is it just a few peak or very special experiences that then sort of energized or shed light on the remainder of your life? Do you know what I mean?

Experiencing Watergate

Joseph Jaworski: Yes. I think that there was a difference in intensity. As I got into my later 30s and early 40s, I began having these experiences more and more, or I think I was becoming more conscious of them. I was living such a fast life. I was a trial lawyer and building a huge law firm, and making a lot of business deals. I was on this very fast track from 25 to 35 or 40. It was like being on a sporting team like Bill Russell, because you had teams of people focused on achieving something in a very short period of time and you had nothing else going on. Among these team members this same feeling would happen. But I was not so conscious of it, I was not trying to figure it out. I was just have these experiences and then tucking them away. It wasn't until later, say when I was about 42, it was after the Watergate affair.

COS: Which happened when you were...

Joseph Jaworski: 39, that's when it happened. My father was the Watergate prosecutor, and he would come to the family ranch to meet with me on the weekends because he didn't know who he was able to trust on this new Watergate team in the prosecutor's office. He would come talk to me, because I was a trial lawyer and I could relate and share with him. Mainly I was listening and sort of pulling things out of him. We would go out in the fields, the boondocks, chopping and clearing. He shared a lot of the transcripts that he was getting his hands on before anybody else would look at them, before it was public knowledge. I would see Nixon, the president, on television lying about all this at night, because the country was in crisis over this. **It caused a huge disconnect in me. I was deeply troubled by how someone like this could ascend to the nation's top office. It was like a personal crisis for me in my life. I also went through a divorce at that time. That caused me to begin reflecting on a lot of things. It was happening in many different realms.**

It even happened when I was shooting clay pigeons. One time I meditated before I went out and almost shot a perfect score, which is 25. I was in this sort of meditative state, and I was just shooting all these things and finally people started gathering to see. A champion can shoot 24, maybe, or 25, and I got to 24. Right before my final shot, this guy said, "Do you realize that you're about to shoot 25?," and that broke the concentration. I missed the last one. This was about the time I left the practice of law and started the American Leadership Forum.

COS: That was when?

II. Turning Point: Meeting David Bohm

Joseph Jaworski: 1979, 1980. I was head of our law office in London. It was a major crisis in my life, you know, to leave the law firm which I loved, and had been with for twenty years. One morning after I left I was running out in Hyde Park early one Sunday morning. I saw a newspaper, with this headline about **David Bohm**, and it just started something for me. I ultimately met with him, and asked him specifically about these experiences. I asked him what he thought was going on. **He talked to me about collapsing boundaries, and I think this was the beginning of my real quest for knowledge.**

I was seeing him because I wanted to start this not-for-profit program to develop better leadership in America, and I had no idea how to begin. Just instinctively, I went to him and of course he gave me the ultimate answer. He said, work with these people. I had told him the general plan I had of wanting to gather twenty or twenty-five leaders across sectors, close to the top of their chosen field. I wanted to give them the opportunity to transform like I was. He said, **what you need to do is to remove the blocks that separate these people. Then you can operate as a single intelligence for the good of the community or the region.** How do you go about

eliminating the blocks between people so that they can operate together as a single intelligence? That was the beginning of my lifelong quest, actually, to learn about this phenomenon.

COS: What I've heard you say so far is that your underlying question related to a different mode of learning to actualize emerging futures relates to the experience of collapsing boundaries in your life.

Joseph Jaworski: Right.

Two Questions

COS: You gave a number of instances now from your early years, til your mid to late-40s. And as part of that, you developed two questions. **The first one was how to understand these collapse of boundaries, right?**

Joseph Jaworski: Right.

COS: The second question arose after the meeting with David Bohm, and involved how to bring these kinds of collapsing boundary experiences about, how to produce that experience. And not just individually, but on a group or collective level, right?

Joseph Jaworski: Right.

COS: Let's move into the next years, and also look at the story on both levels. The level of experience, but also the level of the underlying question that comes with it. David Bohm was the turning point, right?

Joseph Jaworski: It was an extraordinary experience for me and it was a turning point.

COS: And what happened afterwards?

Getting On The Track, In The Flow

Joseph Jaworski: What happened was that I actually set out to do just what he charged me to do, which was to figure out how to produce these kind of experiences. After that I had an experience that was so extraordinary that I can't describe it without sounding a little crazy. But it informed almost all of my work for the decades after that.

I walked out of his office on a Monday, and during that same week these experiences started happening. I was totally committed. I want to emphasize that on that Friday when I walked out of my law firm, I was totally committed to bringing something about with what was later known as the American Leadership Forum. **There was no**

turning back, I was out on my own and I had to do it. The first experience was with David Bohm, and when he charged me with what I just said, I was committed to that. Then these experiences started happening which were synchronistic.

COS: What experiences?

Joseph Jaworski: The first one was when I was walking down the street near my flat in London. I walked past a magazine and newspaper stand. I'd passed it a hundred times, but this time I stopped and looked, and saw this magazine, *US News and World Report*. At the top of it, sticking up, it said, "Rx for Leadership in America." I pulled it out and turned directly to it, and it was an article by Tom Cronin, I bought the magazine and went to Colorado, because he was saying all the things that I believed. He agreed to meet with me, and I poured my heart out to him for an hour or two, and at the end he said, "I'll help you. The first person you need to meet is John Gardner." I said, "Well, I've read John Gardner's work, *Renewal*, and *No Easy Victories*, but I couldn't get in this guy's front door." He said, "Well, I was his aide at the White House. I'll get the phone," and he said, "John, there's somebody you need to meet." Two days later I was in Washington, sitting in front of him. So I poured my heart out to him. He just sat there the whole time, he didn't say a word. He just looked at me, very stoic, you know, and I thought I had really screwed up something.

COS: But you didn't dare to stop.

Joseph Jaworski: I didn't dare to stop. He just sort of nodded and kind of looked at me. Then he turned around and rummaged around in his desk. He pulled out this piece of paper and thrust it in my face, and he said, "Here, read this." And it was a letter that he had written a week before to the head of the Aspen Institute. It was about three pages long. If you've ever read any of John Gardner's letters, they're like --

COS: Pieces of art.

Joseph Jaworski: Pieces of total art. I was reading this and I was just in disbelief, because he was saying to the head of the Aspen Institute the same things I was just saying to him.

COS: Really?

Joseph Jaworski: Yes. And I looked up and he was smiling for the first time. He said – he was very formal — "So you can see, Mr. Jaworski, that I believe in what you're saying and I'll help you." I won't go on and on, but the same things happened for six more months. He led me to Harlan Cleveland. Harlan Cleveland is another national treasure, you know. Former ambassador to NATO, he was in Kennedy's cabinet, he was head of the Humphrey School of Leadership. It was the first leadership school that had ever been developed. This was 1980 and he had developed

this whole curriculum. He had been an educator for much of his life after a lot of other things. Remarkable individual. And John put me right in there with him.

COS: You were on a track.

Joseph Jaworski: On a track, and in the flow. I ended up with Gardner, Harlan Cleveland, Warren Bennis at USC, Rosabeth Moss Kanter at Yale. Henry Steele Commager opened all sorts of doors. Then Dennis Mullane, CEO of a highly respected life insurance company. He was head of the West Point Alumni Academy. All these wonderful people helped me put this thing together.

III. Creating The American Leadership Forum

Over the next ten years, my team and I were able to elicit these experiences on a regular basis among these people. We would select twenty or twenty-five leaders in these communities who were at or near the top of whatever they were doing. CEOs, mayors, and chiefs of police. We would go through a selection process, put them together, have a two- or three-day orientation session, and then they would spend seven days in the wilderness with them. During this process I met Peter Senge. He was doing Leadership and Mastery, and he qualified me and some others on my staff as teachers. We put together a curriculum that had elements of L&M plus outdoor activities, and it was magical. When we returned from the mountain climb we would send people out on solo. They would actually be alone for 24 hours with a little food and some water. We would get together the next night and sit in a circle around the campfire. Although we didn't use the term then, it was a dialogue, with a collapse of boundaries.

COS: How would you know that it happened? What would you notice?

Joseph Jaworski: All the things that are classic hallmarks of true dialogue now would occur out there. People would speak from their hearts. Sometimes it was like there was something speaking through people but not necessarily by people. A lot of times people could not remember what all had happened. People could not give voice to this very well, except they would call it magical. They would use words like that. We would get feedback at the end of the year. And these were prominent people. Many of them wrote about it, or when they were asked to give speeches they would talk about this experience

COS: We talked about the first stage as a time when you had these experiences individually, and then the second stage, from your mid-40's onward, was when you produced the knowledge, in a sense. You developed the knowledge of how to produce this experience on a group level in the wilderness setting.

Joseph Jaworski: Right.

COS: So the ALF decade was in the 1980s.

Joseph Jaworski: That's right, 1980 to 1989.

COS: What happened afterwards? What happened to your experiences and to your questions?

IV. Moving On To The Next Adventure: Royal Dutch Shell

Joseph Jaworski: At the latter part of that decade, I knew it was time for me to leave and begin another task.

COS: How did you know?

Joseph Jaworski: It was just an inner knowing. I actually didn't give a whole lot of thought to it, it was just this feeling I had that it was time to start a new journey. Someone showed up in my office named Renata Karlin. She was with Shell and she reported directly to Arie de Geus.

COS: We met her in Houston the other day.

Joseph Jaworski: We met her on the street. Do you remember that?

COS: Yes, I do.

Joseph Jaworski: She called from New York and said she wanted to meet with me. I thought it was because she was with Shell and I had gotten some money from Shell to run this program, and that she wanted a report. So I said, fine. She showed up and put her purse down and sat across the table from me and said very matter-of-factly, "Well, Mr. Jaworski." She started telling me all about Shell. I just listened and listened, and she told all about Royal Dutch Shell and the unusual structure that they had. All about their scenario planning and all about Arie, and I just thought it was wonderful. Then she just looked at me and said, "I want to ask you, would you be willing to be considered as the leader of the scenario team?" I just almost fell out of my chair, because I had no inkling of any of this. I had no previous experience around any of this. It turned out that her close friend, who ultimately became her husband, was a guy at Shell who I had made a passing remark to about a year prior to that.

COS: In a presentation, I remember.

Joseph Jaworski: In a presentation. He had told her about me back then, and when they needed a new head of the team, my name came up. There were several others on a short list. I said I would love to do it, and I ended up doing it. That's when I began having some other experiences that related to groups of people that were in this same domain.

COS: In what way were these other experiences different? You really got into the inside of organizations, of large organizations, is that right?

Experiencing A Large Organization From Within

Joseph Jaworski: It was my first experience in a large organization.

COS: It's a whole other world, isn't it?

Joseph Jaworski: A completely different world. It was exhilarating to be in there, but frightening. I was scared to death. Within a year or two after I got there, *Fortune* and *Forbes* had Royal Dutch at the very top of the companies in the world. The stakes were extremely high. I felt a real obligation and responsibility. I had never done any of this work before. I'd gone to it because it was such a wonderful learning opportunity, but a huge responsibility. The politics and just getting to understand the system were a pivotal experience in my life.

COS: What made it a pivotal experience?

Joseph Jaworski: Being given the sort of mantle of authority that goes with this opens doors everywhere all over the world. It was a once in a lifetime opportunity. I really loved doing it. I never worked so hard in my entire life. As part of the Scenario work, I met with some of the most remarkable people in the entire world. And the opportunity to go all over the world for over a year. I had a wonderful team of people that I largely chose. I was seeking them out, but I worked with a group of people who were heads of major companies, who were deeply spiritual human beings.

COS: Would these be business leaders?

Joseph Jaworski: Not all of them. One in particular was the chairman of Cannon, the chief executive officer. He felt the same way, because he kept allowing me to come see him and bring my colleagues to meet with him. Because in the realm of Shell everything was very rational and there was very little heart intelligence.

COS: Almost the opposite of collapsing boundaries, right?

Joseph Jaworski: Yes, exactly. Everything was very rational. Their whole scenario planning process was very rational. I ultimately wanted to go deeper and go beneath the surface, to sense the future that wanted to emerge, which people at Shell didn't understand. And this was like being --

COS: -- from a different planet.

Being From A Different Planet

Joseph Jaworski: A completely different planet.

COS: I gathered from your story that the “collapsing” experiences you had during the Shell period were primarily with people in one on one kind of meetings.

Joseph Jaworski: Right.

COS: That was the first part of the 1990s. Then in the second half of the 1990s you moved to Boston. How does that connect? What’s the big picture of the 1990s?

Joseph Jaworski: There was a group of about the top 50 people in Royal Dutch Shell. These were rational tough business unit leaders called coordinators. There was a group of them called the committee of managing directors. As a part of my observing, I decided to have deep, one-on-one interviews with all these people, of three and four hours each.

COS: Where did you get that idea? That’s something you pioneered within the Learning Center community, right?

Joseph Jaworski: Right. That idea first was developed by me when I was working with witnesses to put together the trial of a lawsuit. Many of these people did not want to see you. You’re the last person they want to see.

COS: So what did you do?

Joseph Jaworski: For whatever reason, once I was able to get in the front door and sit down, I would be able to create this situation with them. That was the beginning of it.

COS: Okay, so you decided to do these interviews.

Joseph Jaworski: Pierre Wack, the grandfather of scenario planning, suggested that I do this. Kees Van der Heijden, a mentor of mine, also helped me understand that it would be good to talk to these people to try to understand the Shell system. But I decided to do it differently. **Others had always taken somebody with them and had a one-hour conversation. It was all very rational. I wanted to go deep with these people. I interviewed all of them and put together an unbelievable picture of the internal world of Shell.** I had these boundary blurring experiences with many of them.

V. The Next Adventure: Boston

I had agreed to stay at Shell for a fixed amount of time, and when I left I wasn’t quite sure what I was going to do. I ended up, at the suggestion of Peter, moving to Boston

to join him at what was then called the MIT Organizational Learning Center, in a completely undefined role. **I moved here with my family not knowing at all what I was doing. I had a deep knowing that this was the right thing to do but couldn't articulate it. Peter and I never discussed what I would be doing.**

COS: Did you tell your family?

Joseph Jaworski: No, I --

COS: So that was late '95 or late '94?

Joseph Jaworski: 1994. By that time I was writing the book *Synchronicity*. I had gotten Betty Sue Flowers, my editor, to write up the scenarios in Shell. She and I had spent a lot of time there but was too busy to work on the book. When I left Shell, before I came to Boston, I spent a good bit of time working on the book. I finished it up when I came to Boston. I knew deep down that there was something really important here, and that the only way I could actually make a contribution would be to try to write it down.

COS: Share the story.

Joseph Jaworski: Share the story. I couldn't do it any other way. Writing the book actually became an obsession.

COS: Really?

Joseph Jaworski: I am not a natural writer and I didn't have a real plan of what to say. I didn't know how to go about doing it. I was actually using this same process of just going with the flow. I would send a chapter to Betty Sue, and she and I would sit down and talk to Peter about it. It was a major undertaking for me, and I knew deep down it was important. I felt if I could just write that book before I died that it would be okay. If I had to die after that it would be okay. It was that important.

The Question Underlying "Synchronicity"

COS: If you had to describe the question that underlies your book, what would that question be?

Joseph Jaworski: How to access our highest source of creativity so that we can give birth to something entirely new. To know what it is that wants to happen in the world and bring it forth into reality. I had had all these experiences I've been describing to you, but if you separate these into different things, into different realms, how would bring it all together? I wanted to bring these experiences and what I had learned from David Bohm, Francisco Varela, Rupert Sheldrake and others together in a coherent set of principles. **I believe that the most important realm of leadership**

is the one that we've been discussing. It's this capacity to collectively sense what it is that is wanting to be brought forth in the world, and to bring it forth as it desires.

COS: What happened after you finished your book, during the latter 1990s?

Joseph Jaworski: I began working with Peter at the MIT Organizational Learning Center. One of the first things I did was to respond to a request by the CEO of Shell Oil Company, Phil Carroll. Phil and his company were experiencing great difficulty. Their company needed a major transformation. Phil had actually been brought in to do that. He was a longtime Shell person, elected as the CEO. Shell was a member of the OLC, and he asked Peter if the OLC could help. Although Peter wasn't able to articulate it, I think that's exactly what he was wanting me to do. I think he felt I was senior enough to actually be able to work with a senior management team like that.

I began working there, and spent about four years in that system. Actually we're still working in it. I tried to use this deep listening interview process as a way to do two things. One was to understand what was happening in that system at a very deep level. And two, to use that as an instrument to begin breaking down the boundaries between people so they could operate like ALF had, as a single intelligence. I was sort of making it up as I went along. I was using the same type of intention and process that I did at ALF, but I hadn't used it in a transformation process. I had to trust that if I held the right intention, things would happen the right way. It was a wonderful few years. Peter and I, along with Kaz Godz, one of our associates, wrote a paper about the deep listening interviews, the learning impediments workshops we did afterwards, and the strategy dialogues that took place after that. I loved working with those people there. I had conversations with many people where I experienced these collapsing boundaries, and a deep, deep empathy with one another.

COS: Did these interventions change the field of the respective organization in a long term view or were these interventions more short term bumps in the road which then quickly get neutralized by the immune system of the larger system?

Joseph Jaworski: Shell went into a different organizational mode in the midst of this, which I think was part of the transformation. There was a reorganization between Shell Oil and Royal Dutch Shell, the Shell Oil Company being a North America operation. It's hard for me to say exactly how sustainable this would have been if we had gone on. I believe that the process is one that should take maybe ten years, ultimately, to play out. I see evidence of the fact that the work that we did not only transformed individuals' lives, but has also transformed the life of the organization. I have this fundamental belief that in order to transform an organization you start with the individuals in it. But it's open to question now because of what happened.

COS: What other significant events and encounters occurred in the latter part of the 1990s?

Joseph Jaworski: In the late '90s we were given the opportunity to do research in an Alliance of the downstream operations of Shell Oil Company, Texaco, and the U.S. part of Saudi Aramco. They made one huge company out of it, which we just refer to as the Alliance. It is the largest downstream operation — marketing and production — in the world.

Generon was engaged in the transition from these three companies to one company, the Alliance. It lasted a year. Toward the end of the year, after all of this work had been done, one of the senior executives of Texaco stood up and gave a speech at the end of a long meeting. He spoke from his heart and soul, and said he was afraid that his whole Alliance was going to fail. The people in this Alliance had been brought up in these old stodgy companies that he referred to as elephants, and given the new environment and the new economy that they were jumping into, they needed to be very fleet like gazelles. He said he didn't believe that "we can make this transition from being elephants to gazelles, and I'm afraid." That had a huge impact on everybody. I remember sitting in the audience listening to him and saying that's it, that's what this organization is going to need, to think and to learn in this new way.

VI. Sensing The Formation Of Social Fields

I held this intent and about a year later a new learning director had come to the Alliance. His name was Gary Jusela from Boeing. He just said, we're going to create this kind of leadership development project. And that was what we did. We laid out how the research was going to be done with your help, Otto, and others. We presented it to the CEOs and they agreed and funded it for about a year. Now the research has been done, the pilot program has been developed. The first segment of that will be delivered in February. It's been a wonderful experience.

COS: What made it a wonderful experience for you?

Joseph Jaworski: One of the things was working with someone like you who had the capacity to put some order to all of this that I had been thinking and dreaming about for twenty years. I think this could be a sixth discipline. It was also wonderful to experience the breaking boundaries repeatedly during different dialogues, and during the interviews. When you and I would have an after-action review and it happened between us. Or it would happen to us in other times when we would just go off and sit at a coffeehouse to talk about the principles. Well, what made it wonderful was I was recapturing this time and time again over the last nine months on a very regular basis. New knowledge and learning was taking place that were important for me. The quality of the people who were involved was just remarkable.

COS: Did this only happen off-site, during interviews, or was it also something that happened and was transferred into the design team of the line managers?

Joseph Jaworski: We had a wonderful design team put together of twelve line managers from all over the Alliance. Gary Jusela went to the CEOs and the various business unit heads and said, “These are the kinds of people we would like, and you select them.” And they did. So those experiences also occurred between all of us as a team. The most profound time that it occurred was the last meeting in Houston, at The Houstonian.

COS: What was it that happened?

Joseph Jaworski: There was a mini-crisis and we called a little halt to the meeting. We went out in the hallway and talked about it, and got things back on track. When we came back, Dave Chapman, who is the deputy head of the Trading Company asked a question that came right straight from his heart. It’s not so much what he said, but it was what he was asking and the way that he asked it, and the feeling that went along with it immediately it just went “clunk” for me. I actually went down to that place at that moment. I don’t know exactly what happened but I just stood up and pulled all these flip-charts together and stuck them up, sort of seven in a row, and began teaching from them, or more like talking from them. We were talking about this phenomenon and how it occurs and the same experience that we’ve been describing occurred. Time slowed down, and there was sort of a transcendence of the whole group, the structure of the room changed.

COS: What do you mean by a transcendence and by a changed structure:

Joseph Jaworski: I don’t know how to explain this, but, to me, there’s a palpable feeling that is in the room. It’s like a field that you can actually touch, a tactile sense in the room changed.

COS: Where would that field be? Would that be outside of yourself or inside yourself, or both/and?

Joseph Jaworski: Both/and. It was outside, but it was also very much inside. **I’m sure it’s different for different people, but when it happens for me it actually occurs inside of my body. I can hear it and feel it in my head. It’s like when I’m meditating, I have this, it’s vibrations or a ring, which I’m feeling right now.**

COS: And where would that be in your body?

Joseph Jaworski: Well, it’s all through my body, you know, in the heart, or in the gut, and everything. But also, here. I hear it all up in here.

COS: At least from the head to the center of the body.

Joseph Jaworski: To there, right. I don’t feel it down here.

COS: Yes, I would have given the same description. You said the structure would change. What do you mean by a changed structure?

Joseph Jaworski: Well, I don't know how to explain it, but before it happens there is not a certain energy in the room or a certain something you can feel. But when it does happen then there's something that I imagine is like a huge energy field in the room.

COS: The energy field is not isolated within yourself, but it's rather ...

Joseph Jaworski: It's a unity.

COS: It's a dynamic unity.

Joseph Jaworski: It actually goes outside of the room at times, and there's this feeling of unity with the world.

VII. The Key to All of This Is Love

COS: If you were to summarize the essence of what you found out during the last year of research, and of all your previous work, what would be the key points that come into your mind? What is it that you brought to surface in that last year's work?

Joseph Jaworski: Well, there's one penetrating insight that I've come out with, Otto, and that is **that the key to all of this is love**.

COS: Does that happen because you are a particular person? Or that you are consciously bringing it forth? Do you know what I mean? Your question was how to produce it, so is it something you consciously bring forth, or is it something that just seems to happen?

Joseph Jaworski: **I think this can be developed in people.** I think that's the whole purpose of the program we're putting together. I think that it is an innate capacity in every human being to be that way, and it is the natural human condition.

COS: It's the natural human condition, and yet in everyday experience it often doesn't happen, right? So why would that be? So what's getting in our way?

Blocks

Joseph Jaworski: I would like to be able to articulate this better, but it's the blocks that Bohm talked about, and the necessity to find ways to remove the blocks.

COS: What are the blocks that you have to move out of the way?

Joseph Jaworski: I think it's been socialized out of us. I am speaking from a Western paradigm. In the West this is much more difficult for us than in the Eastern tradition. You know, it's the Western scientific paradigm, you know, of separateness. Our institutions—schools—and even our language is that way, subject, object. I was brought up in church and they were not teaching this kind of love in church. It was all rational and a lot of it was about fear.

COS: Removing the block is also very consciously paying attention to, for example, your call, and to what is the purpose of it. So in other words, there's also always the story underneath the story.

Joseph Jaworski: Right.

COS: At the last semi-annual meeting you were talking about your father, when he returned from World War II, from Germany. It just made me aware that there is also a whole other dimension, which is this deeper level of what really one's purpose in life is. The capacity to operate on that level is not just removing socialized boundaries, it's also the capacity to consciously access that underlying stream, right?

Joseph Jaworski: Exactly.

COS: Maybe you could talk a little bit about that. You were talking about the deep impression your father made on you about what happened in Nazi Germany. You were saying something about wanting to work so that this doesn't happen again, but that exactly the opposite can happen on earth.

Joseph Jaworski: Right, right.

VIII. Encountering Nazi Germany

COS: I just wanted to indicate there is also this other more deeper level which really is about purpose and deep intent. Could you share a little bit with us about that level, that might really illuminate --

Joseph Jaworski: Going back to the thing with my father and all?

COS: What is it that really, really drives you?

Joseph Jaworski: I didn't realize that that's what was driving me until a few years ago. My father was a lawyer when World War II broke out, and he was old enough that he did not have to go to the war. But his father was an immigrant and his brothers immigrated, and they felt a deep responsibility to the country. So he volunteered and left everything behind to serve the country and to try to defeat what was going on here in Nazi Germany.

He was placed in the 8th Service Command and was given the responsibility of handling some really important cases in America that related to prisoners of war. He did that so well that they elected him to be the chief prosecutor of the earliest war crime trials that could be held, in order to set the precedent for the Nuremberg trials. There was no precedent, modern precedent for war crimes. So he had the foundational responsibility to actually try the first four or five of these. It was a huge responsibility. He did the Darmstadt trial and the Dachau trial. I was just a little boy, nine or ten years old. I was following this really carefully, the best I could. There was no television, of course, and the only thing we got were letters from him and they were screened. You could only say so much in these letters. On Sundays there was a radio program from Europe and they would have recording of these generals and top people reporting from the front lines. I would sort of keep up with it that way. But I didn't know what was going on, these were war crime trials.

He was sent over just before the war ended. He would go in as these camps were liberated so he could gather the evidence. He stayed for a year, a year-and-a-half after the conclusion of the war, and tried these cases, and executed the people responsible. They asked him to be the chief prosecutor for the Nuremberg Trials. They had promised him he could go home if he wanted to, and he felt like he had done what he needed to do so those could be successful. When he came home he brought with him all of the evidence of these four or five cases. He had this study that he had built just before he left. I remember he took these things in and there were huge boxes and folders of these photographs. And he said very sternly to me now, "You're never to go into this study to read these, I'm locking them up." The next day I went in there and began looking at all this. And it had a really profound impact on me.

It was fifteen years before he could actually write about it, it was such a horrible experience for him. He wrote this book, it's a small book, and dedicated that book to me. He said he hoped I would never have to see this sort of thing. The point of the book was, he said, "We must be very vigilant in America and in the world, because the forces that allowed this to happen in Nazi Germany --

COS: What were the forces that let that happen?

Joseph Jaworski: The total **absence of love**. If we would read *The Art of Loving* by Erich From we would see more of the answer.

COS: The thing he says is that love is not something that happens or doesn't happen, but love is something that is connected with your intention.

Joseph Jaworski: I think it's a **lifelong effort to keep purifying that intent**, to keep working on it. I look at what I have set out for myself, and it's written down, and I concentrate on that every morning in order to be able to do that today.

IX. Intention and Social Fields

COS: If your intent is pure—what does that really mean? What would be an example of when I could operate on an intent which is not really pure?

Joseph Jaworski: An unpure intent might appear to be somewhat benign, but it's really fatal, and it's usually when you're operating out of your ego. If you're going in to put on a show or to look good.

COS: You would not operate from your ego or your smaller self, but from a different place. What's that different place?

Joseph Jaworski: It's the capital S Self, capital S.

COS: Capital S Self, what is that?

Joseph Jaworski: That is your highest source of creativity.

COS: How does that relate to the field, to the experience of the field formation that you described on the meeting in Houston the other day.

Joseph Jaworski: The one at the Houstonian.

COS: Or the 250 people.

Joseph Jaworski: There are radio waves, there are television waves, there are electrical fields, all sorts of things that you can't touch or feel, but they are there and there's that structure in the room. There are also, for lack of a better word, social fields, and Bohm said that these fields are deeply affected by our intention and our way of being. And that was profound for me. He also spoke to me about Bell's theorem, the idea of non-localness. That was a model of change that just completely turned my world upside-down. **It was critical for the work in Shell to develop a critical mass of people who could hold the right intention and know what that is.** I guess that would vary in each instance. We have had many experiences where you can get a group of 15 to 20 people together under the right aesthetic circumstances, and with even one person who is holding the right intention ultimately it's -

COS: Would the right intention be "Joseph's" or something to do with the emerging whole? How would you describe what the right intention is or isn't?

Joseph Jaworski: To me it would be operating out of the larger Self, so you see yourself as part of the unfolding. I think of the quote that we came across by Abraham Maslow.

"The first great task is to search for one's identity. Each person must find his or her true, active self, and after that task is accomplished, then life's real problems lie ahead. Clearly, this task is related to finding one's calling, or biological destiny.

That is what is the mission that one chooses to love and sacrifice to? ... The person who has acquired a sense of self and direction can use all of these tools simply as tools. The tools serve rather than boss their user. ...

That is the key point: First you must be a good person and have a strong sense of selfhood and identity. Then immediately all the forces in the world become tools for one's own purposes. At once, they cease to be forces that cause, determine, and shape but become instruments for the self to use as it wishes. ...

Essentially, if you know who you are, where you are going, and what you want, then it is not hard to deal with inane bureaucratic details, trivialities, and constraints. You can simply disarm them and make them disappear by a simple shrug of your shoulders. I know that I am apt to become impatient with young people today who attribute so much power to social pressures and forces. I point out that all we need to do is pay these influences no attention, and then they vanish. ... **Persons who have achieved their identity are causers rather than caused."**

So first you must be a good person.

COS: We are talking now about the most fundamental principle of this whole work. The first principle, as you said, or the key to everything is love.

Joseph Jaworski: Right. And actually, I think that is, you might call it a root principle, or --

COS: All-encompassing.

Joseph Jaworski: All-encompassing, it's not even a principle.

COS: No, it's not even a principle. So it's all-encompassing, and then the first root principle that you mentioned was intent, right?

Joseph Jaworski: Right.

COS: So you talked about intent and the importance and power of intent, and also what it takes to operate on the right intent, where you are part of the unfolding rather than part of your own ego. So what would be other roots principles that you consider critical.

X. Three Root Principles

Joseph Jaworski: I set forth three principles in the book that interweave into here. To be able to access the source of higher creativity, I think three principles need to be in place.

Number one, I think that the first is you must see the world as non-substantial. You must undergo what for us Westerners is a real **shift of mind** to see the world as truly open and non-substantial. With that, of course, everything is possible. If that's the way the world is constructed then everything becomes possible.

The second is to **see yourself in relationship to everything** in the world, see yourself as part of the unfolding. Then, of course, your life has meaning by definition, and your task is to search for that particular role that, as Maslow was putting it, is your biological destiny. Sometimes that is a lifelong journey. So that's a second thing, to be on that journey.

The third is understanding a different kind of commitment, being so committed that you would actually rather die for it than give it up. But this commitment is different than the kind that we normally think about, because this is a commitment to bring something forth as it desires, not as you desire. So it's as Martin Buber was talking about: you **surrender to your grand will**, as opposed to your puny unfree will. This is a completely different kind of commitment than I ever knew about. I knew the kind of commitment that you make up your mind and you're going to make it happen. So those are three principles.

COS: And they include what you said about intent, so that would be the third one here.

Joseph Jaworski: Yes, exactly.

COS: Let's return to what you said earlier, that the key to everything is love.

Joseph Jaworski: Right.

Love

COS: What does that really mean? Are you suggesting that business people and other leaders, that everyone who does things, who makes things work in the social world, that they operate on love? And what would that really mean? What do you really mean by that beyond a radical statement? The second question is, as a senior consultant, do you really think that this is the way to do it and that there is no other way?

Joseph Jaworski: That's what I'm saying, period, paragraph. I know that's radical but I believe that's it. I believe that the world is moving to the place where people will understand that more and more. It's not true now. But I feel it's moving that way.

COS: Can you say more about that? In another presentation that we recently did you said we are at the incipient stage of a new awareness. Can you say a little bit more about it?

Joseph Jaworski: I said that we're at the incipient stage of a wave of spirituality that is going to wash over the world. That's a radical statement but I see these things, sometimes years and years before they happen. I've made the mistake of being too far ahead of my time in relation to business things before. I can't explain it. I just feel this is happening. Now actually, my thing is I actually see it all over, but it's anecdotal evidence.

COS: Can that quality of love be attained by a group of people or a larger system or a larger whole?

Joseph Jaworski: I think it's the latter. I think you as an individual and individuals as a group can hold an intention of empathy or love for one another and for the group as a whole, and the organization as a whole. I think what Bohm was saying was that intention and a way of being can actually shift the field.

XI. The Blind Spot: Not Seeing the Blocks

COS: I have two closing questions. If we go back to the beginning, you talked about the core question as being related to how can we sense and actualize emerging futures. We talked about the collapse of boundaries and how over time that gave rise to various manifestations of your core question. My first question is this. If you consider the research that has been done on your core question - how to sense and actualize emerging futures – what do you consider the blind spot of all that work?

Joseph Jaworski: The blind spot is that we don't understand that the blocks that keep us from seeing how connected we truly are. If we only could remove these blocks that keep us separated, this could literally change the entire world.

COS: The first stage of your work focused on understanding this collapsing the boundaries phenomenon. In the second stage you focused on how to produce it in the ALF kinds of settings. How might you characterize the third stage, your work during the 1990s?

Joseph Jaworski: I think that the answer is I would like the work to take place in groups, and to learn how to elicit this phenomenon in groups, in larger systems, and communities.

COS: These projects would be embedded in organizational structures and institutions, which add a whole other layer of complexity.

Joseph Jaworski: Right, right. We need to learn how to have the larger system sense what it is that wants to happen. How can we uncover the common will?

COS: One issue that one encounters in such endeavors is the shadow work. What would you say about that? What should we pay attention to in the future?

Joseph Jaworski: I'm glad you mentioned it. I have met it many times. I have dealt with it by recognizing that it's there, not being afraid of it, meeting it head-on, and just saying it is there.

Underlying a lot of it, not all of it, are people who have been caught up in a system that has encouraged this kind of fear. They're not evil, but the system has actually taught them to behave this way. I would go into systems and I would see good people destroying other people. That's the game, that's what they've been taught. They're at or near the top and they've been taught to do this. I have actually sat down with senior leaders in huge companies who have opened up and told me about the pain that they're experiencing. And yet they are often the top people who have climbed to the top by behaving in these ways, and they didn't have to do this. I've also seen this change almost overnight. I know of people who had been doing this for maybe 15 or 20 years became transformed almost overnight.

COS: What other questions would you consider you relevant or important, that deserve future research?

Joseph Jaworski: Right now my mind is set on doing pilot programs in collective settings, where you can actually do this sensing in a collective way. As part of that I'd like to do some work on actual practices. How can we help people form intent? And the other one is about meditation.

COS: Why do you think meditation would be important?

Joseph Jaworski: I am convinced that meditation is a key element of the capacity building of the future. One effect of meditation is to calm and still the mind, and to help a person be more stable. But the second effect is developing the capacity to drop underneath the chaos of surface reality and to see a more enduring, generative reality. I want to do a lot more work on that.

XII. Reflection

Early in his life Jaworski had the profound experience of discovering a deeper bond of connection to other people and to other living beings. He described this deeply moving experience as a "collapse of boundaries." His work then became organized by two guiding questions. One, how should one understand this collapse of boundaries? And two, how could one help others and groups to experience similar deeper relationships both individually and collectively? Jaworski's story is a

wonderful example of what Master Nan (in his interview) talked about as “entering the meditative space of leadership” and what Eleanor Rosch calls “primary knowing.” He expresses the belief that “the key to all of this is love,” that is, the process of opening the heart. This insight suggests a radical new starting point for rethinking the foundations of social science and management practice and relates to the work of the 20th century philosopher Kitaro Nishida (on Nishida, see the interview with Ohashi).

XIII. Bio

Joseph Jaworski has devoted much of his life to the study and practice of leadership development. He began his professional career as an attorney, specializing in domestic and international litigation at Bracewell & Patterson, a large Houston-based law firm. For 15 years, he was a senior partner and a member of the executive committee of that firm. In 1975, he was elected as a fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers (which comprises the top one percent of U.S. trial lawyers). In addition, he ran a successful horse-breeding operation (Circle J Enterprises), and helped found several organizations, including a life insurance company and a refining company.

By 1980, Jaworski had resigned from all of these activities to found the American Leadership Forum, a non-governmental agency responsible for developing collaborative leadership. Ten years later, he was invited to join the Royal Dutch/Shell group of companies in London, to lead Shell's renowned team of scenario planners. Thereafter he returned to the U.S. as a senior fellow and a member of the Board of Governors with the MIT Center for Organizational Learning.

Joseph Jaworski's current focus is on helping leaders and organizations develop the capacity to sense and bring forth emergent futures – a critical key to success in the new business environment.

Jaworski is the author of the critically acclaimed book *Synchronicity* (1996; Berrett-Koehler), an explication of generative leadership based upon his lifelong work and experience. He is a founding partner of Generon Consulting and is currently completing a book on leading transformational change.