An Exploration of the Uncanny and Mystical Influences Developing Leadership Thinking, in the Context of Rising Technological Complexity and Declining Organisational Certainty.

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Abstract

This thesis is based on a research study conducted into understanding the uncanny and mystical influences developing leadership thinking. Using biographical interviews, the study examines how leaders use such alternative perspectives during periods of rupture and uncertainty in their professional careers. I will also consider how personal and professional biography is convergent in participants' understanding of the need for irrational thinking in response to the increasing logic of work. The thesis will go on to explore how the formation of superordinate objects may provide containment when other complex systems appear unable to do so.

Key words: the uncanny, mystical, death instinct, establishment, superordinate object, containment, mourning.

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I would like to express my gratitude to the following:

...humans manage to forget the miracle of being here. Rilke said, "Being here is so much." It is uncanny how social reality can deaden and numb us so that the mystical wonder of our lives goes totally unnoticed. We are here. We are wildly and dangerously free.

O'Donohue (1997 p197)

Many mystics have been able to describe a situation in which it is believed that there really is a power, a force that cannot be measured or weighted or assessed by the mere human being with the mere human mind

Bion (1982 p371)

O the mind, mind has mountains; cliffs of fall

Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed. Hold them cheap

May who ne'er hung there.

Gerard Manley Hopkins (2002)

Table of Contents

Section 1: Setting the scene

Section 2: Findings

Section 3: Discussion

Section 4 Closing thoughts

Appendixes

List of abbreviations

Abbreviation	Definition
BDA	Biographic Data Analysis
BDC	Biographic Data Chronology
BNIM	Biographical Narrative Interpretive Method
CEO	Chief Executive Officer (the highest-ranking person in a company)
DNA	Deoxyribonucleic Acid (the molecule that carries genetic information for the development and functioning of an organism)
EBSCO	Elton B. Stephens CO (company) Information Services
EThOS	Electronic Theses Online Service (British Library Database)
FANI	Free Association Narrative Interview
HND	Higher National Diploma
MBA	Master of Business Administration
OBE	Officer of the Order of the British Empire
PEP-Web	Psychoanalytic Electronic Publishing Web
PIN	Particular Narrative Incident
ROI	Return on Investment (a calculation of the monetary value of an investment versus its cost)
SO	Superordinate Object
SQUIN	Single Question aiming at Inducing Narrative
TFA	Thematic Field Analysis
TSS	Text Structure Sequentialization (the structure of the sequential development of a [narrative] interview)

Chapter 1

Introduction

This research explores, through biographical interviews, the uncanny and mystical influences developing leadership thinking in times of technological complexity and declining organisational certainty. It was a small study of eight participants, but one which I hope will provoke thinking in this area.

The role of leadership for many is at its best viewed as a visionary 'knowing', based on a solid body of knowledge in appropriate areas, such as social welfare, finance, governance, logic, etcetera. The influence of the uncanny and mystical would, certainly in public, with perhaps the exception of the church, appear to play very little part in leadership thinking. However, I believe it has a significant but rarely voiced part in leadership thinking, which has relevance to understanding paradigm change within organisations, as well as adding to forms of thinking within the systems psychodynamic approach to organisational consultancy.

The heart of the study lies in the case studies of individual narratives, the arc of their lives and their leadership development, as well as all the events which impacted on their thinking. The key aim of the research is to give voice to uncanny and mystical experiences which, in the context of the individuals' leadership development, have influenced their role in the organisation. The research then seeks to move beyond the subjectivity of the individual participants, to understand the use of the uncanny and mystical as a thinking model more generally.

These biographical studies throw light on experiences, which might be thought of as 'out there', beyond the pale of rational organisations. However, they might also prove a necessity in the

future of all organisational thinking, in light of the technological complexity in which civilisation finds itself.

The thinking described by individual leaders within this report, leaders from a variety of fields, point towards a future which goes beyond personal interpretation or understanding, a future where organisations as the containers for individuals become less certain and the 'out there' even closer. Their narratives invoke more than the end of an individual generation, they speak to the portent of revolution in a wider historical, political, and social frame. I hope they will also invoke revelation in the reader, opening up consideration of the unspoken uncanny and mystical within organisational experiences, thereby bringing closer the portal to the unknown.

Chapter 2

Choosing an area of research

I am not a mystic. Nor would I be inclined to follow anyone who professed themselves to be a mystic. That is not what drew me to this research.

Yet in my role as a consultant, I have often heard the suggestion voiced, 'Be careful, he can read your mind'. The insinuation was that as a consultant 'outsider' I somehow had unnatural powers. My response was usually to say I am simply curious as to what the group or individual finds difficult to voice, what might be useful to them. My intent has been to disrupt the idea that as a consultant, I know what to do or have the answers.

My professional background has always followed two distinct tracks: the first, the result of my parents' wish that I get a real job, becoming an engineer, and the second, which emerged later in life, the role as a psychotherapist working for the NHS. One thing that appeared common to both these worlds seemed to be the importance of having someone to listen to, my role being to leave space for not knowing, to be curious about what might feel shameful, to contain ideas counter to what others view as 'normal'. Then, in an experience which for me was a revelation, the tracks came to merge or at least overlap on occasion, in the role of organisational consultant.

While organisations often give support and resource to an individual's 'mental health issues', so as to get people back to work, there seemed to be little space for curiosity about unsettling thoughts, daydreams, voices, that suggested the presence of other things beyond work, things at odds perhaps with the organisational tide of thought.

I proceeded to interject in group discussions where help was being sought, bringing in my curiosity as to what might not be spoken about, offering fleeting thoughts, ramblings. At first it felt awkward, provocative even, to disrupt the groups thinking and while I was often mocked,

I was rarely expelled. In fact, I was sometimes invited to meetings in which I had no role or requirement to consult, but almost as an outsider who might find something to give voice to, on behalf of the group.

As a result of these twin career tracks and through this study, I have come closer to understanding my own valency to the 'outsider' role, one which is both difficult in terms of receiving the projections of others, but also exciting in the heightened curiosity at the uncanny and mystical edge of deep unknowing, waiting patiently for what emerges from it. However, whilst all the participants in the study seemed eager to talk, it was not without risk for them. They too were opening themselves to the unknown, and not knowing, potentially facing shame about the idea of leadership as not being in control or having authority.

I am reminded of this unknowing darkness, having watched in the predawn hours as Ellen MacArthur emerged from the dark, having survived her solo sail around the world. It was watching the inky TV screen for the emergence of a tiny light, when there was so much risk to her boat, even so close to shore. To be truly in the unknown, guided by some irrational sense, must surely be a terrifying thing to go to; it might mean madness, or even death. As TS Eliot remarked in the preface to Crosby (1931)

> *"Only those who will risk going too far can possibly find out how far one can go"*

Indeed, it has been my journal, and my predawn ramblings that have helped me to discern the rocks and the headlands, as well as the uncanny and mystical emergence. The journal has been my silent other, one which at times I scorned, not having written for days, and on other occasions moved to frantic detailing, such as seeing a string of shiny moving objects in the predawn sky, thinking I had become alien to myself, not thinking straight. On that occasion the experience revealed itself to be a result of Elon Musk's launching a series of satellites, which

travel together like a group of geese until they reach the right orbit height before separating, the Sun not yet visible from where I stood, glinting on their solar panels.

Growing up in another time and place, my grandmother would have been suspected of being a witch. She kept odd hours, welcomed strangers, read tea leaves, had feral cats, and had foretold the death of her first-born son after hearing a banshee. As her semi-adopted son, I lived with her on a farm in no man's land, by the boundary of a divided country, never really knowing when I was going home. A lot of unexplained things took place there. I have never thought of myself as being in touch with other worlds. I'm far too skeptical, a trait developed no doubt from those early years, when the truth was a ghostly dangerous thing somewhere by the forest edge.

But I cannot deny my inherent abundant curiosity. I am that curious cat, the one at the edge of the group, the fool, who would be hanged for going too far. The seeds of my enquiry surely began on that farm, germinated, no doubt by the stories of others, as well as those I told myself, listening for whispers, looking at shadows, fearful of meeting a ghost on the stairs.

I start so far back because I feel it is unwise to forget the past, even if we feel the ghosts have been laid to rest; their echoes sometimes can be felt in what we currently perceive.

Much later, on the eve of my starting my doctoral expedition, while in Costa Rica I witnessed a brutal murder of a toucan, killed not by a natural predator, but by a group of its own. While its body lay on the ground, already being consumed by the jungle's unseen inhabitants, my curiosity was interrupted by the staff in a hurry to remove the body from the scene of the crime. My curiosity was at odds with their business. I remark on this simply because I crossed the boundary into academic research, with no great plan to save the world, but an unexplainable urge to see what was in that jungle.

Then I fell upon the topic of metaphor, specifically, a paper by Diamond (2014) and I was hooked. The revelation that there were metaphors used to obscure organisational intent, as well as living metaphors, capable of ferrying the anxieties of groups in the sea of change.

I began thinking about metaphor and its use in organisations, how organisations could be viewed through metaphor, as explored in Morgan (1980, 1986) and how they were often superficial containers of anxiety during change. However, when emerging from the group, rather than prescribed by the organisation, a metaphor could be a truly creative container, enabling the processing of deep anxiety-provoking experiences.

My diary entry on a piece of consultancy reminded me how much this could be so. In working with a group of engineers, I had a moment of reverie. I had the image of a woman on the morning of her wedding standing before the mirror in her veiled wedding dress. Having shared this with the group, they mocked and jeered it as having nothing to do with the merger they were going through. Their family company been subsumed by a large corporate organisation. I had taken a risk sharing my vision, but it appeared to give the group agency to replace it with their own: a metaphor of finding a wife pregnant with twins, the TV having broken down and just been laid off, standing looking in the shaving mirror.

This processing through metaphor seemed an acceptable area of research and my focus was on the related system psychodynamic literature, exploring it with tutors and in peer research groups. In the work with the group of engineers, the imagined mirror for me as a consultant had reflected the optimism of change. Yet the emergent metaphor from the group was one of existential anxiety, the introduction of new technology in a merger they would mean layoffs. They had little idea what their identity in the new family would be.

This direction of research choice, the use of metaphor in organisational change developed well, but my main concerns centred around how large the area of the field was. However, my journal entries started to be the container of undigested dreams, two of which were particularly striking.

In one dream, I stared into a grave like opening with steps leading in, and a voice warned that there was no knowing how deep it would be. In the other dream, I had reached to get the kettle from a campfire, but the handle turned into a snake. It slithered into the woods, and I followed it.

The dreams unsettled me. I felt they were a message about my direction and being prepared to go deeper, to risk death. In my dreams I was braver than in reality. The earlier quote from T S Eliot, which I put as an inspiration in my journal appeared to mock me. Although metaphor was a worthy area, it was well trodden field and it felt safe, too safe.

Then a breakthrough moment came in supervision. In speaking about the stories we tell ourselves, based on an exploratory documentary about hidden family truths by Sarah Polley (2012), as well as acknowledging my ambivalence about metaphor and the idea of playing safe, I was asked a simple question: Why have I started on the doctoral program, what was the 'Kapow' moment?

The underlying roots, no doubt unconsciously influential, as to why I started were not immediately clear or well defined, although the belief in a group able to tolerate an outsider was in there somewhere. One thing was clear however. I knew when the 'Kapow' moment was: it was Judas, the hanged man.

Shortly before embarking on my masters, I had been in an antique shop whilst on holiday in Sicily. I was in a state of lazily looking at objects, with nothing particular in mind, when I looked towards a wooden carving on the wall. I experienced a literal sensation of being punched

in the gut. I was stunned and I uttered the single word 'Judas' unbidden by any conscious thought. The shop assistant enquired if I needed help. I said it was Judas, leaving out the experience of coming into contact with something unnatural to me. The owner of the shop came over and again I said I was fascinated by the carving of Judas, already I felt myself toning down my experience, not to upset others. The owners acknowledgement, soft-spoken, that it was Judas, clearly unsettled the assistant who offered to take it down.

This incident, which made no sense, had disturbed my thinking, but also begged the question, what had I experienced? It was no small thing. I felt, to borrow from Murray (2002:22) that I too had shed my innocence as to how the world worked *'with the suddenness of a fly caught in the web'*. It had felt as if I had come into contact with something truly beyond my knowing. But this self-editing, the urge to return to something stable, appeared to be happening in supervision.

Metaphor was fine, but what I wanted to know was, if I had such an experience, a momentary profound suspension of what I know, an experiencing of something beyond my rationality, surely others might have such experiences also. While I had felt compelled to speak of this, I thought it was madness to do so. Let alone suggest it was a potential reason for my research, to understand such experience and the impact on thinking. What I was clear about was that on such an endeavour as a doctorate it was critical that it be something I was passionate about, the spark that could be held onto in the darkest night.

On exploring this in supervision and peer groups, as well as my reflective journal, there was always energy, a compelling curiosity, as if something repressed had been given a voice, something not just in me. It was not all positive however. Some people struggle to speak of their experiences which are uncanny in nature, or which felt mystical. Indeed, in a breakout group for a presentation I gave at the National Institute of Organisation Dynamics Australia,

NIODA's 4th annual symposium in 2003, it was felt strongly by some that such uncanny experiences were a private matter akin to belief. One individual went so far as to say it has no bearing on leadership or organisations of the future.

My choosing of an area of research was based on this contradiction: one side believing this was irrational nonsense, an indication of individual neurosis with no place in building the future, and at the other end of the scale, people who were fired up at being able to voice such experiences and explore what it might mean for the future, if it could be acknowledged in a group or organisation. Essentially, do such 'ghost on the stairs' encounters present an important organisational paradox? How can the irrational, the uncanny, the mystical be usefully present at the same time as the dominant logical organisation's opposition to unknowing?

<u>Chapter 3</u>

<u>Literature Review</u>

<u>Aim of the Literature Review</u>

This review aims to establish the volume and significance of the literature related to the present study and to consider a place for new research. I will begin with an outline of how I identified the literature, followed by a background section, then a review of the literature identified within two main headings, 'The Uncanny' as revealing agent and 'The Mystical' as transformative other. I will end with a conclusion.

<u>Literature Search</u>

My initial research was conducted electronically using PEP-Web, EBSCO, and The British Library EThOS databases. An initial search was made to establish if any research had been completed on understanding the use of uncanny and mystical influences in leadership thinking. This delivered no matching results and led me to conduct a wider search using a combination of search terms such as, 'the uncanny', 'the mystical', 'leadership thinking', 'technological complexity' 'organisational uncertainty', alongside Boolean logic commands, thus, "searching the databases using all the different combinations... using the AND/OR/NOT commands as appropriate" Aveyard (2010:79).

The literature identified in these early searches was refined via examination of the research, title, keywords, and abstract leading me to 168 possible papers, most of which were sourced

electronically. However supplementary searches were carried out at the Tavistock library along with the British library.

The reference lists within 168 papers were examined to establish if further relevant material existed. The "snowballing" approach identified in Greenhalgh and Peacock (2005) resulted in the identification of 39 additional papers. The accuracy of the searches was confirmed by the recurrence of the same titles appearing in the reference lists. All 207 papers were reviewed resulting in a shortlist of 194 papers, all of which contained some element of understanding the use of uncanny and mystical influences in leadership thinking. A further examination of these papers led to 6 being discarded as not peer reviewed. This resulted in a final 186 papers reviewed (see Appendix A, Literature search overview table).

Background Section

Grobman (2005) suggests that the metaphor of the organisation as a machine has failed. What is clear is that in the information age there is a lot of what Krantz (2011) refers to as dissolution and dislocation, in line with what Armstrong (2010) refers to as the erosion of boundaries leading to ontological insecurity. This would suggest the deterioration of a holding environment which would contain and foster growth.

There have certainly been surprisingly large collapses, Enron, British Aerospace and Carillion to name a few. However, while some suggest this may be thought of as the natural occurring cycles of growth and recession, others propose that something more substantial is happening. If we take a system view outlined by Long (2016) that person, organisation, and context overlap in an interdependent connecting field of experience, then increasing global connectivity,

political unrest and increasing terrorism are important data. Indeed, Shore & Wright (2000) go so far as to suggest that we may be in a period of 'epochal cultural change'.

The response within many organisations would appear to be an increase in the management culture of control. Power (2016) suggests there is an explosion in auditing aimed not only at avoiding disasters, but as a means of protecting against intangible fears such as loss of reputation. However, he also proposes that rather than predicting risk, thereby enabling decision-making, auditing is often provided as evidence of the true transparent picture, often framed to cover decisions already made.

The consequence, even if unintentional, is a developing mindset which Powers (1994b) coined 'self-audit' and the policing of the auditors as a potential scapegoat in the event of disaster, a disaster which Vaughan (2005) suggests often springs from the banality of organisational life.

Shore and Wright (2000, 2015) take this further to suggest the new world order of audits as a means of controlling professional behaviour at arm's length. As a means of measurement then this also suggests a new form of subjectivity. However, Maltby (2008) counter this by suggesting that the works of Powers lack historical evidence and contain a bias as to who should be audited.

The reason I dwell on Powers idea is that it appears to fill some need for the creation of such systems within the organisational context, indeed within a social context of uncertainty. How then, within an age of such scrutiny of leadership, where there is a demand for what Stein (2005) terms 'ocular proof', could the mystic and uncanny experience find a voice, be heard, find authority in the mind of leadership?

Samuel (2012) suggests that the same rules apply to an organisation as to a biological entity. There is the inevitable entropy resulting in death, if not an outright disappearance, then a

merger with something else or even reconfiguration. For example, vinyl records were felt to be dead in the advent of CD technology, but the big picture was the return of vinyl as a retro style to fill a growing niche market. The alternative however is difficult to face and Kahn (2017) evidences that organisations suffer greatly in their denial of the end, with unexpressed feelings often speeding up the organisation's demise.

Kahn (2017) proposes that one response to such overwhelming experience, is manic activity. Might then the increase in data, the need for counting, be evidence of a need for reassurance against existential fears? Is this mania for 'turning a blind eye' in the way Steiner (1985) suggests not so much repression but denial which needs others' views to be silent to go along with the concealment? The result of this however, as Denhardt (1981) suggests, is that organisations are seen as characterised by the rational planning of things. Could this single focus then be seen to kill curiosity, which is viewed as irrational in the culture of 'what can be counted, counts'? What then might be the result of such self-surveillance be?

My hypothesis is that in this rapid growth of one view, Taylorist in nature, with the demands for increasing speed and technological complexity, there is a risk of pushing out other forms of thinking, in much the same way Bollas (1999) suggests there is a need for both parents, one which makes and enforces the rules and the other that nurtures and enables alternative views. It is this issue of balance which I suggest is key in leadership. If there is to be a restoration of equilibrium in the organisational field, then giving voice to conflicting thoughts is important.

It is this aspect of self-surveillance, which is most damaging, in that experiences of leaders are not given voice to for fear of being shamed or more insidiously not being able to grow and by extension corroding the organisation. The subtlety of this is exampled in the work of Lucey (2014) where the inability to voice experience leads to the stifling of growth.

The outcome of this can be seen as Kleinot (2017), Hoggett (2009) outline that if we are to act as we are taught, without challenge and denied the room to think, the resulting sense of humiliation could lead to scapegoating rather than collaboration or the leaving of leaders.

This diminishing of self to fit the role seems to be counterintuitive considering, as Kleinot (2017) proposed, that institutions and groups need genius and creativity to grow. Indeed Gino (2018) makes the business case for curiosity. However, she also cites the leadership mindset of believing people will be harder to manage, as well as it being costly and messy to encourage such curiosity, along with a belief in the focus on efficiency to be above that of exploration to be two main impediments to real organisational curiosity and growth. I believe that without curiosity these, hidden assets will remain out of reach. How then should this gap, this imbalance to thinking, be addressed?

I am proposing consideration of the mystical and uncanny perhaps offer one such alternative. It seems clear, as Gabriel (1995) suggests, that there is a degree of prejudice towards considering mysticism in its true sense, a state of mind Bion (1997) describes as below the level of words. Too often mysticism in an organisational context has a negative connotation, as Allcorn (2015) defines it as a mere means of complexity and obfuscation. Indeed, Preston-Shoot & Agass (1990) suggests that the field of analysis itself has on occasion suffered from such use of language as if to avoid clear statement.

What I am referring to is something more which, as Grotstein (2018) put it, is "the mystery lurking in the obvious". It is the opportunity to discover in the gaps of mundane space what Küpers (2011) suggests is a source of creativity, something which Merkur (2009) refers to as 'wholly other' a numinosity which is unclaimed by religious doctrine, an experience which is without words, but if held onto and reflected upon can be a source of energy and direction, the ability to grasp at wonderment. Indeed Kourie (2008) takes this further, suggesting such

mystical modality as an antidote to problem solving, a means of 'unknowing'. A thinking which Rousseau (2014) proposes can be thought of in the system approach to incorporate intuitions, worldview, and goals.

So, if this source of energy and creativity, this alternative state of thinking exists, why isn't it being used?

Fenwick & Lange (1998) put forward the case that it is. He suggests that the innate need in individuals to access something more is actively being targeted by learning programs which cannot easily be questioned. In effect the space for authentic self, which Bollas (2018) refers to as the personal idiom, maybe being hijacked to corporate profitable ends.

However, it may not be as simplistic as this. It may well be that the need for such mystical wonderment, even if inauthentic is being met elsewhere. For example I wonder if there is any correlation between the breakdown in supporting organisational structures and the rapid rise in online gaming sales. Such platforms appear to offer alternative worlds of fantasy and alternative roles, often with mystical content. Where then, to borrow from Bion (1997), might the curiosity come from to access the buried thoughts, as yet unknown.

In a strange way what I suggest is that it comes from part of the problem of global connectivity. Stacey (1992) outlined in the principles of chaos theory that when tension builds within an organism, a point is reached where there is chaos just prior to bifurcation, a point where the outcome as yet is unknown, but there exists great potential. Within organisations, Argaman (2007) suggests the fluidity in change is also an opportunity for new positioning and changes of direction.

So, to be open to alternative thoughts, to be open authentically as Grotstein (2018) suggests to the mystical, also means being open to emotion, irrationality, the potential for chaos internally.

It is for this reason Grotstein (2018) hypothesises that mystical experience may be limited by internal structure as well as external context.

At the outset of this paper, I quoted part of a poem by Gerard Manley Hopkins. Whilst the poem is regarding the experience of deep depression, I felt it could quite equally describe what it is to be suspended in the unknown and why it may be a strength of leadership to bear it, let alone seek it. To begin with, it takes what Bollas (1989) refers to as an essential ruthlessness not to immediately be drawn to an idea in order to stay suspended in the hope of the 'unthought known', the ability that Argaman (2007) describes to say no, and in so doing open oneself up to what Grotstein (2018) refers to as the ultimate reality of 'O'. In doing so it requires what Civitarese & Ferro (2013) refer to as listening to the narrative as if it were a dream, a dream with the ghosts of ideas.

What then of the uncanny? The temptation has been great to remove it from the title, for as Freud (1919) outlined, it is to see something familiar in an unfamiliar way, to look at a doll for example, which for a moment appears to become human, an idea which Watson (2002) explores as real possibility.   In fact, what Freud refers to as anomie, a double which in the mind is a reassurance against death, unless encountered, has become an issue which robotic development refers to as the 'uncanny valley'.

What I am suggesting is more in the way of what Beyes & Steyaert (2013) refer to as 'unciting', when an uncanny experience can produce disjuncture, a moment of 'unknowing' which if taken without dismissal could lead to an alternative vision, a different viewpoint. It is similar to the simple act of resistance suggested by Beyes & Steyaert (2013) of the Flâneur who walks the city as if part of the system, but suspended within it, open to unseen possibilities, open both the mystical and the uncanny.

While staying with an unstable situation or thought, waiting as Grobman (2005) suggests for a solution to emerge, such isolation is apt to be experienced, as Ogden (2004) describes the analytic technique, as being open to primitive and basic feelings to the point of being unbearable. While this opens a creative potential of chaos as Stacey (1992, 2006) suggests, it also risks what Watson (2002) calls the effects of non-linearity where a small change could have a large effect, perhaps, for the individual or the organisation.

For example, had a NASA leader been able to say that delaying the Challenger launch by a few days, to warmer weather, wouldn't make a difference in the time frame of 100 years, then disaster might have been avoided. That would have required a 'no' of huge magnitude.

The presence of the mystical and uncanny in the service of leadership may seem like a step too far. As Roberts (1994) points out, to play in fantasy with a thought too close to what we fear can have serious consequence if we are suddenly surprised by the strength of our emotions. Merkur (2009) suggests this is the difference between awe and wonderment, awe containing too much anxiety to make the meaning of wondrous experience possible to be thought about.

Perhaps however a small step towards unknowing is possibly found in play. Winnicott (1953) suggests that within bounded play, a 'potential' space between two minds enables room for what Winnicott (1971) calls 'reaching out' to unorganised nonsense, to find a part of a new self. In a way, play may be a tentative step towards Bollas (1989) the unthought known and personal idiom; play in the way that Evans & Palmer (1989) term serious play, with self-reflection as an instrument, which offers a chance to address concerns about the absence of discernment.

This however is not to acknowledge what Schechner (1993) calls 'dark play', where the aim is not reflective and simply a wish to destroy the other and ultimately the self as can be seen in

organisations such as Enron. What I am referring to is more of what Schechner (1993) terms a looseness, unbalancing and rebalancing that can be played with as Roberts (1994) suggests, a container for thinking as opposed to alternative management.

Storytelling is another way of approaching the unknown thought. It works towards addressing the issue at hand because as Gabriel (1995) suggests it is neither conformity nor rebellion and offers a plasticity of experience. Ahmad (2004) goes further to propose that it is a vital force to the qualitative outsider, in enabling an 'other' approach to seeing, ultimately a form that enables the making of order out of chaos. It also gives some clue to the underlying unconscious process by pointing to what is being left out: questioning where does the irrelevant reside?

It is unlikely that play or story creation get to 'unknowing' as fully as in the presence of numinosity. However, they perhaps can help to counterbalance or offer space for reflection in the new age of organisations. Yet Simpson, French & Harvey (2002) regard that the ability to slow down when the pressure is for action is to understand the importance of 'negative capability', a phrase used by Bion (1970) taken from Keats (1970) which perhaps comes closer. This quality of being in uncertainty is a means of promoting the 'unknown', one which enables leadership to step out beyond the context of the known, even if only for a short period, to find alternative perspectives.

'The Uncanny' as revealing agent

Literature searches using 'the uncanny' lead to a vast amount of papers and books, some using Freud's (1919) paper as a springboard for explorations in the fields of literature, art, and film. The uncanny is used as a shorthand for the power of frightening or strange emergence, what

Hinton (2007) refers to as the potency of the elusive signifier, particularly in relation to the double, haunting or death.

In literature, it is a tool for inducing a sense of alienation or creepiness, particularly in the Gothic literature (Punter 2001) linked to alienation through the architecture and culture of the time. Architecture is the setting for the turn from heimlich to unheimlich and in the process revealing what ought to have remained secret and hidden but has come to light, such as in the exploration of the modern unheimlich house by Vidler (1992). Hook (2005) extends this idea to include monumental spaces that are constructed to induce ideological auras.

Royle (2003) comprehensively explores the subject of the uncanny with its relevance considering psychoanalysis, the death instinct and the views of madness surrounding such uncanny experiences. While authors such as Sievers (2008), Beyes & Steyaert (2013) and Masschelein (2011) bring the uncanny into the field of organisational analysis, the uncertainty induced by the uncanny is considered as an 'unconcept', a means of accessing the unconscious in organisations. They demonstrate the power of the uncanny to disrupt and offer the space to question the rationalised value of organisations and fixed meanings.

Another key area of the literature review was the unsettling effect of the uncanny in relation to technology, the 'uncanny valley effect', an effect induced when robots mimic human features creating a negative reaction to the uncanny such as extensively analysed in Weiget (2022) and Diel, Weigelt & MacDorman (2022). It's worth noting that authors such as Bach (1975) and Tinwell, Nabi & Charlton (2013) relate similar uncanny reactions in relation to encountering narcissistic individuals.

In effect the literature so far shows how the emergence of the uncanny brings the individual to a place of unsettling uncertainty at the very edge of certainty, one which Barford (1995) termed

'primitive agony', the physical pain of being between belief in disbelief. However, Simpson (2023) proposes it is in this very margin, between 'canny' and 'uncanny' where psychic growth happens. Yet he also emphasises an integral part of such psychic change is the mourning of infantile losses, developed in Klein (1940), the dealing with 'the ghosts of our ideal objects' Simpson (2023). It is this early developmental unconscious use of objects along with the use of 'surmounted primitive beliefs' such as presented in Süner (2019) and Windsor (2020) which I believe to be particularly potent elements at this edge of uncertainty and foundational to this research.

The value at the edge of uncertainty is well represented in the literature from the perspective of psychoanalytic relationship, evidenced in Hoffman (1987), Scarfone (1996) and Goldsmith (2002). However, it is also understood through the lens of complexity theory, originating with the seminal work of Lorenz (1963), and followed by such authors as in Spruiell (1993), Miller (1999) and Turtz (2020), who sought to utilise understanding of messy nonlinear phenomena within systems.

'The Mystical' as transformative other

'The Mystical' shares much with the uncanny, as in searches a large proportion of the resulting literature was focused on poetry, art, and fiction, describing ways in which the object has the means to induce changes in the thoughts and feelings. The subject is transported and transformed in some way through the symbolism generated by the creative.

Another large proportion of the literature search centred around the origins and experiences of mysticism within well-established religious organisations, but it is not the intent of this research

to venture too far into that territory. This research is focused towards the mystical revealed in the uncanny experiences in leadership thinking, although one may not exclude the other, such as in Francis, Village & Powell (2019) who surveys the openness to the mystical dimensions of leadership, exploring the boundaries of established thought. Equally literature regarding the use of drugs to induce ego dissolution with the aim of mystical experience has also been discounted from the literature review findings, although Huxley (2004) gives evidence towards what such an experience might be like. Barsuglia et al. (2018) also analyses in an empirical / quantitative study the effects of such mystical experiences.

In terms of leadership, this research is not focused on how others see the mystical in their leaders, although Young, Morris & Scherwin (2013) exemplifies a useful empirical / quantitative study in this area. Mindfulness was also prominent in the literature results, as a process which was thought to reliably and validly measure a process in individual and collective thinking which was not mystical or mysterious. However, this is countered by Siddiqui (2005) who suggests the philosophy on which such mindfulness is based is more an art involving people. Cooper (2010) proposes that to incorporate Buddhist mystical beliefs of nonlinearity is not anti-intellectual and could restore a creative value blended with psychoanalysis, while Bartunek & Moch (1994) suggests the attributes of the mystical experience might be incorporated in a planned organisational change.

However, the mystical element, most useful to the endeavour of this research is better limited by the works of Reiner (2018) and Kurtz (1989) who, building on the works of Bion, explore the Mystical presented by remaining curious in the true space of 'unknowing', open to wonder and awe, as well as the death of illusion.

Conclusion

Understanding the influence of the uncanny and the mystical in relation to the psychoanalytic dyad appear well served in the literature reviewed, brought up to date by Stein (2019) and Bar Nes (2022). However, when it comes to leaders in organisations and how the uncanny and mystical might play a part in their thinking, the research and literature is somewhat sparse.

The works of Klein (1940, 1946) and Bion (1962) are key additional resources along with Freud (1917, 1920) on mourning and the death instinct, in understanding the deep roots of influence from early symbolism in play and containing by the other. Bion (1970) along with Hoggett (2018) worked on the establishment, as well as Armstrong's (2005) concept of the 'organisation in the mind' are also useful lenses to understand thinking of leaders when considering the uncanny and mystical.

There would appear to be a gap in the literature that considers the thinking of everyday leaders who wish to hold in mind the uncanny and mystical, to support a curiosity which holds potential value at the chaotic edge between knowing and unknowing leadership, leadership of what Turner (1974) called the 'in between self'. There is a need to understand how the non-rationality of the uncanny and mystical can exist with the rationality of more established thought systems. Works such as Otto (1950), Capra (1992) and Underhill (1999) have also proved useful in understanding this area of marginal thinking.

Chapter 4

Research Questions

Drawing on my own experiences of consulting, as well as other strange encounters of the psyche, and through the initial review of the literature in the area of the uncanny and mystical in leadership thinking, I developed a number of thoughts. These then overtime became a cluster of questions that crossed the boundary of curiosity into a struggle to find answers using the available literature, in an area which appeared to have been overlooked to previous studies. However, the overriding question remained the same.

'An exploration of the uncanny and mystical influences developing leadership thinking, in the context of rising technological complexity and declining organisational certainty'.

It was now accompanied by a series of four sub questions;

- What kind of psychosocial experiences give rise to uncanny and mystical experiences in organisational leadership roles?

- What impact have these unspoken uncanny and mystical experiences had on their leadership development and thinking?

- What might the subjugation or repression of such uncanny and mystical experiences have meant for the participant?

- What contextual factors have influenced, inhibited, or supported their recollection of such experiences?

Yet, while this initial framework served me well, other questions and thoughts emerged which did not fit these constrictions. This clash of ideas was a recurrent theme, especially as more data become available and the group gestalt of the interviews was experienced. I was often tempted to alter these established questions and even to consider dropping 'the mystical' to ease the growing pressure to fit the sub questions. However, in writing my reflective research journal, I realised it was potentially significant for the research to hold in mind these emerging thoughts, as well as maintaining the original structure, since these clashes of thought, might somehow mirror the research groups' internal struggles somehow.

- Why for some was there a sense of grief?

- Did some participants attend simply to record achievements?

- Why did some senior leaders attend the interviews and not wish to talk about the uncanny and mystical?

- Why did I feel mentally blocked by some leaders?

- Would a conversational interview have a revealed more?

- How did participants see their reason for their attending?

- Did leaders really want a therapy session?

- Why did energy levels vary so much between interviews?

- Did participants feel they were being charitable by attending?

- Would a group experience have enabled participants to speak more freely?

- What did these leaders really want to be when they were young?

In the ebb and flow of data, there were many more random questions like this. I am sure some were lost, while others become brighter for a moment, taking my attention off in a tangent. Some were answered by being swallowed up by others. There were also the questions arising from what was not said but was acted out in my thoughts. For example there was a period when I was drawn to television programmes featuring war atrocities, which led to my thinking of how death was in the background of a lot of participants' narrative. But the question as to what death and violence had to do with the uncanny and mystical could so quickly have been dismissed. Such tangential emergent questions led me into other areas which felt irrational in regard to the sub questions, but ultimately appeared to surface some of the silent struggle being played out.

Chapter 5

Research Methodology

This chapter is aimed at three things, why the particular methodology was chosen, how it works and how it was used in this research.

Why this methodology?

In researching the influence of uncanny and mystical in leadership thinking, what I felt was needed was something slightly paradoxical. Paradoxical in the sense that the subject matter might prove difficult to speak of as a leader in a high-level position. So while the methodology needed to liberate the participant to speak openly, it also needed to provide the psychological safety to do so. Even prior to choosing a method, the pre-interview fantasy was one of a revelation of the supernatural, a meeting of a *'ghost on the stairs'*, and the realisation that an overly structured method would be very unlikely to elicit narratives of that nature.

The prospective participants were likely to be mature leaders who unconsciously might not be comfortable with being a follower, which a semi structured type interview would imply. They were also likely to be what Hollway & Jefferson (2001) refers to as a *'defended subject'*. I was looking for something as close to free association as possible. With this in mind I considered forms of dream analysis, particularly the social dream matrix, utilised by Sievers (2008) and Lawrence (2005). However, again this seemed to privilege the researcher over the subject, as the data would be effectively interpreted before it could be analysed.

Also while other group methodologies initially seemed appealing, they too would introduce the potential of what Bion (1961) referred to as defensive basic assumption behaviour. A group

of leaders from varying fields, were also very likely to be inclined towards competitiveness. This being potentially in conflict with their internal narrative, leading to what might be felt shameful to expose in the leadership group forum. A shame Gidden (1991) identifies as an anxiety resulting from having the adequacy of their self-identity challenged.

However, having personally realised the power of the stories we tell ourselves, as in Polley (2012) and Holloway (2021), as a means to both hide and make sense of our biographies, I wished to enable participants to have free rein to go anywhere within their life history. The hope being they would likely be drawn to pivotal moments nested within their biography, as well as potentially incorporating something of what Gabriel (1995) refers to as the *'uncolonized terrain'* of the organisation in which the leader was psychically embedded. Thereby providing the space for the irrational constructions through the signs and symbols beyond our control.

Initially, Hollway & Jefferson's (2000) Free Association, Narrative Interview method (FANI) was considered as a suitable option, one which follows the psychoanalytic principle of free association, enabling the unconscious dynamics of the whole to be better understood. However, considering the psychosocial, as well as the system psychodynamics, I decided to use Wengraf's (2001) Biographic Narrative Interview Method (BNIM), as it offered, in addition to being close to free association, space for thinking of the lived life of the participant. The incorporation and understanding the biographical context, enabling the potential for pattern recognition linked to the organisation and social context of the time.

How BNIM works

BNIM stems from the work of Fischer-Rosenthal and Rosenthal (1997), as a means to collect narrative from Nazi prison guards, who would fall under the category of defendant subjects.

The BNIM methodology advanced by Wengraf (2001) was used in this research. Wengraf proposes a two track approach considered data collected, *'lived life'* and *'told story'* as indicated in Figure 1. below. Analysed separately, both of these tracks are brought together to generate a single case account. This process is repeated through the 10 stage BNIM analysis process to produce a cross case theorisation.

Figure 1. Stages of the BNIM analytic strategy
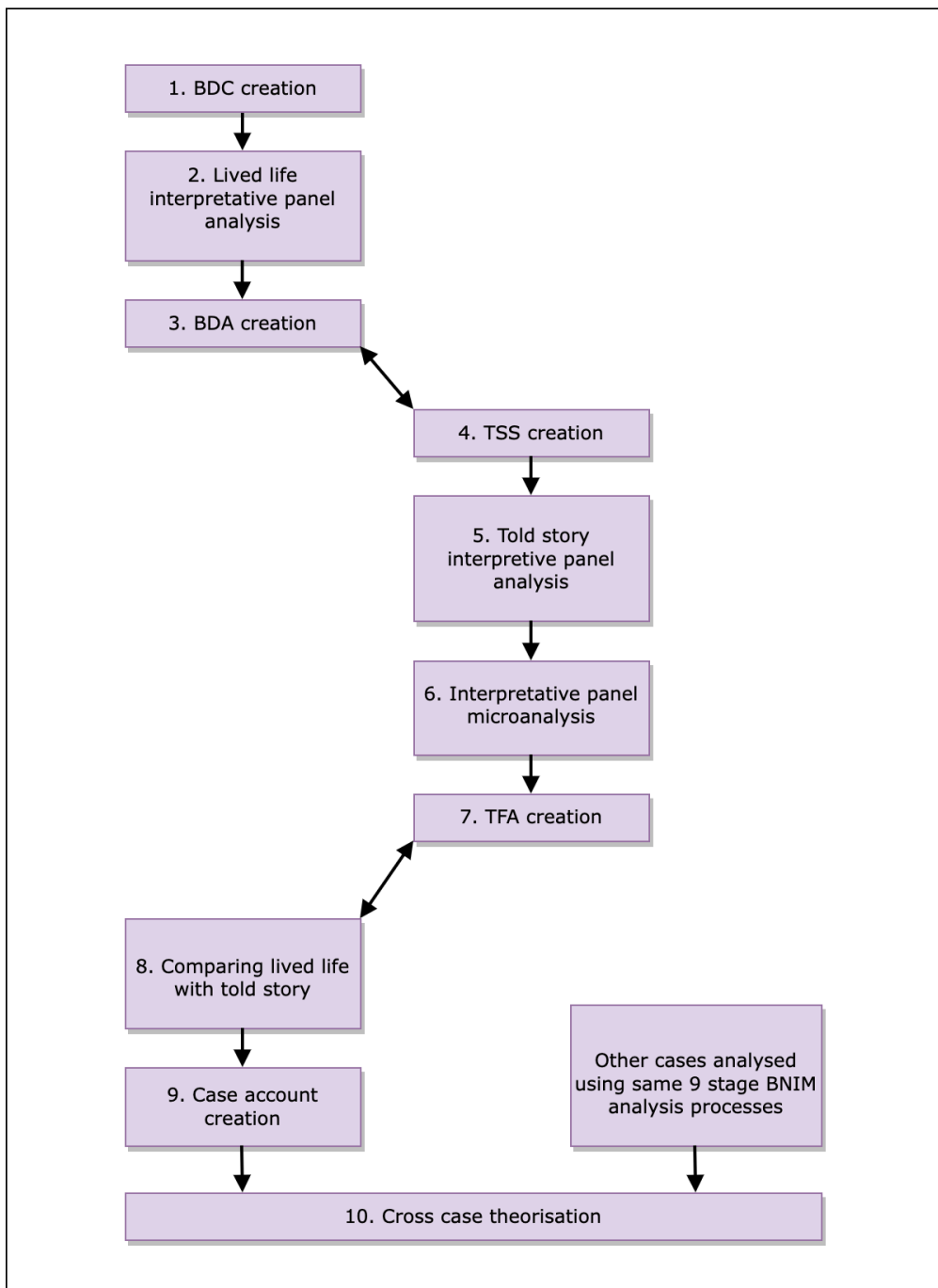
In this research, there were 8 participants and whilst interpretive panels were used to 'kickstart' the analysis and guard against bias, interpretive panels were not used further.

Analysis was carried out using the *'constant comparative method'* (Glaser and Strauss 1968) in order to understand the case history, which seeks to understand the participant narrative within the psychosocial context, and to understand the *'identifying case structure'* in relation to central research question. These underlying formations are critical to understanding the rules by which thinking is operated, the structure beneath a narrative response.

How BNIM was carried out in this research

Key to the whole enterprise is the formation of a single opening question (SQUIN) designed to induce open flow narrative from the participant. Since this is effectively the only verbal instruction from the researcher, with the exception of what Wengraf refers to as support, facilitation without direction. The SQUIN, shown below, opens the first of two interview sessions, proposed to participants as totalling 90 minutes, with a short break in between.

The SQUIN

As you know, I am researching experiences that may be thought of as Uncanny or Mystical and how they impact on leadership and leadership thinking in an organisational context.

So, can you tell me the story of your life from where you first thought you would

be a leader and how it has all developed for you up to now, all the events and

experiences that have been important for you personally up to now?

Start wherever you like.

Please take the time you need.

I'll Listen first, I won't interrupt,

I'll just take some notes for after you've finished telling me about your

experiences.

In fact, six out of the eight participants exceeded this, ranging from 79 to 224 minutes, which gives some indication of how open participants felt to speak freely. The narrative was recorded using two separate recording devices as a safety precaution. Immediately following the interviews, both audio and written fieldnotes were kept of all immediate feelings, associations, and responses to the interview as a whole. The Gestalt being an important factor in the subsequent analysis.

The first session opened with the SQUIN, which gave the participant an open-ended opportunity to speak, and therefore not feel controlled or lead, as much as that was possible in an interview setting. The reality being that both researcher and participant want something from the encounter, even if not explicitly stated or even consciously known. While some participants simply explored through the narrative, others were at times hesitant, even finding themselves confused. The SQUIN was repeated as a prompt, with emphasis on keywords, but any additional explanation was avoided. There were also moments where a simple sound or nod

was given by the researcher to acknowledge the participants experience was felt. In that way, although there was no verbal discussion, psychological containment was provided.

The second session followed a short break, where information collected from the first was formed into a number of emerging Participant Incident Narratives (PINs). The purpose of the second session was to induce further narrative in regard to these PINs, using a set structured sentence, which includes the key point of interest phrase from the participant. The PINs were kept in the same chronology sequence, with some being sacrificed in order to meet time boundaries. However, many participants were keen to expand on the boundary and therefore enable their unhindered responses to PINs.

Data analysis

From the interview recordings a transcript was produced. Initially I consider getting the transcriptions professionally produced or possibly using an AI generated transcript. However, both of these were unsuitable from an ethical point of view, the first would mean an external individual being privy to confidential material and in the second, cloud-based technology has no guarantee of preventing data being accessible to third parties. However, while ethical issues are paramount, there was also a real desire to contain the participants and hold the listening in a form of reverie. A means of listening to tones, hesitations, stumbling through the audio as an unexplored territory. There is only one first time of listening to the audio. In typing up the narrative, at times rewinding and rewinding, significant data in the stumpings emerged.

Following the production of each transcription the initial task was to maintain the two track strategy, producing from the 'lived life' a Biographical Data Chronology (BDC) and from the

'told story' a Text Structure Sequentialization (TSS). An example of a Biographical Data Analysis (BDA) is shown in Appendix. B

These two documents enabled the second stage of the process indicated in Figure 1. From this point the BNIM analysis process outlines the use of *'future blind'* analysis of all the material, using interpretive panels. The intention being to avoid pre-determinism of the material as much as possible, making each new junction point or decision moment as close to the participant experience and to avoid 'wild analysis'.

This macro and micro 'future blind' analysis in the BNIM process would then lead to comparing 'lived life' with 'told story', uniting the two tracks to form a case account as shown in the overview of BNIM analysis process shown previously in Figure 1.

In this research there were two 'kick start' interpretive panels used at the start of the analysis stage, made up of a variety of professionals. The panels consisted of 3/4 participants and where of a 90 minute duration.

These early 'kick start' panels provided invaluable in highlighting the consideration of the biographical context and theorising of potential alternative life directions, as well as an indication of how much their thinking, might be influenced by the social cultural issues of the time. Micro analysis of key sections of transcript also proved useful in appreciating the potential negative outcomes, helping the researcher focus on counter hypotheses and highlighting potential of over positive bias.

In organising these 'kick start' panels and looking at the results highlighted several difficulties, considering there were eight participants in the research group. It proved impossible to attain the ideal panel session length of three hours, with a lot of cancellations, even with the more modest timeframe of 90 min.

This might also be considered as data as to how people perceive the value of their time and the reluctance to focus on what was a difficult topic in relation to the workplace. Also having extrapolated how much time it would take to get these panels calendared and processed for the analysis of the twin tracks, the 'lived life' and 'story told', the decision was taken, with the help of supervision, to use a different strategy for the analysis stage.

However, it is important to recognise that even this limited use of interpretive panels as a precursor to an alternative strategy of analysis was particularly valuable in creating a fertile mindset of constantly constructing and considering counterpoint hypothesis regarding the presenting data. As Wengraf (2001) emphasises, there is a critical need to remain open to alternative hypothesis with increasing complexity during analysis.

Wengraf (2001) himself envisaged the potential need to work on one's own, allowing for a 'kickstart panel' to induce attention to the task of 'furiously multiplying' counter hypotheses in the work of a 'one-person-panel' during the data analysis. Wengraf also acknowledged that grounded theory allowed for this need to expand the interviewer's 'social imagination' as well as constantly entertaining all possible explanations for the observed data.

The use of Glaser and Strauss' (1967) grounded theory method outlines systematic procedures, providing a ladder of analytical abstraction grounded in the data, making use of constant comparisons and of a coding paradigm to stay as close as possible to the world of the interviewee. This method was therefore used for all eight participants to provide a consistent approach, replacing what would have been the use of panels in stage 2 in the BNIM process. An example of these micro and macro future blind panels used to kick start the analysis is shown below.

BNIM Focus Group 1: Summary of Cathy Future Blind Macro Analysis

1964 Born (Age 55 at date of interview)

1982 Attended University
Alternative to no job
A big deal in 80's
Prestigious university
A way of leaving home
1st generation to go to university.

1984 Age 20 Diagnosed with Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma
Medical student self-diagnosis
Low survival in 80's
Cut education short.

1984 'The night before' chemotherapy, specialists couldn't see anything on biopsies
Wrong diagnosis
Self-diagnosis
Second shocking revelation
Complete change of heart about education
Do something completely different as career.

1988 Age 24, on a long-haul flight mentally conversed with her grandmother.
Is this a supernatural experience.
Was Grandmother dead or alive.
A premonition something is going to happen on flight.
Where was she going so young?
Was it business or moving abroad?

1988 Age 24 Grandmother had died unexpectedly during the time of the flight.
Does she think she has supernatural ability?
Probably would after that.
Did Grandmother have Lymphoma, not her.

1989 Age 25, Started practising Buddhism
Flight experience changed her direction in life
She might have been raised by Grandmother
Big impact, started to think about 'other forces' at play

1991 Age 27, became youngest director of multinational investment bank
Didn't become a monk
Didn't see that coming
Youngest Director, Wow, a shock
Assuming it was Big Bank, could have been a start up
Was the degree in that career, heading there all along

She must have been climbing the ladder all that time
Was Buddhism a 'spare time' thing
When you see the ages, easy to think 'linear', pursuing banking for quite a while.

1996 Age 32, decided to retire from the banking
Made her millions by 32 and decided to retire
decided to go on to something else
Maybe she lost everything
maybe she wanted a family
Could have gone into politics
She ran off to the circus
Went to prison for dodgy dealing, likely in a recession
Or it contradicts her faith, became a Buddhist leader

Set up a non-profit retreat centre
For whom, children, youth, homeless
Made enough money, wanted out of the 'rat race'
Something to believe in, something meaningful
She had family and then went back to banking

2003 Age 39 Birth of daughter
Assuming a 1st child
Maybe goes back to banking
Having children late in life because of professional trajectory
Did she try earlier and find she couldn't
Don't see the father in the picture
Was there a relationship with someone else

2009 Age 45 started an Organisation to introduce 'mind training' into the corporate world
She's not afraid.
Foot in both doors, Buddhism and Bank combined
Business likely to be big and successful
Got this really uncomfortable thing, that the cancer comes back
I was introduced and then gone, it confused me
One of those 'weird things' in life
Did she actually have cancer
Was it actually her daughter
True or false, she would reassess her life and live it to the full

2017 Age 53 started divorce proceedings
She doesn't stick with things that don't work, she moves on
She instigated the divorce, because she's decisive
Was there someone else on the scene
Got control of her life
Met someone else, same sex marriage

Husband cut his hand off
Obviously he's not onboard with divorce

In his culture he touched another woman and had his hand cut off
Wow, does that even exist?
Did he do it himself or was it an accident
Maybe he was mentally unstable
Cutting off his hand was a threat, 'stay or else', making a statement

2018 Age 54 became interested in 'active breath work' and silent retreats
Buddhism still coming through, so it wasn't a phase
Too much noise in her life, a need for silence
How was she affected by cutting hand off, Buddhist skills helped her through
Did she go back to the retreat centre

BNIM Focus Group 1: Summary of Cathy Future Blind Micro Analysis

Transcript Section

I was, looking at active breathwork, which is a sort of a psychotropic way of, you know, or anything from going on silent retreats. Em, all those things that just come to me as something that I just have a, /
sense, there's just a feeling, but they're very weak signals at the time, because /
people aren't talking about them.

So how they come to me?
They, they come out of / they kind of come out of nowhere.

So, it's just like I, / there's a sort of sixth sense that makes me go, /
'Oh that's', em, and somehow it kind of, I get, there's little bit of a / pull to it, and then sometimes I, quite a lot of the time, I just allowed the voice that wants to speak to kind of / come through me.

I was, looking at active breathwork, which is a sort of a psychotropic way of, you know, or anything from going on silent retreats. Em, all those things that just come to me as something that I just have a, /

have an understanding of

natural instinct

positive feeling

I was, looking at active breathwork, which is a sort of a psychotropic way of, you know, or anything from going on silent retreats. Em, all those things that just come to me as something that I just have a, /
sense, there's just a feeling, but they're very weak signals at the time, because /

too much interference in the ether

too much bad around

work out what that feeling means

is it something paranormal

I was, looking at active breathwork, which is a sort of a psychotropic way of, you know, or anything from going on silent retreats. Em, all those things that just come to me as something that I just have a, /
sense, there's just a feeling, but they're very weak signals at the time, because /
people aren't talking about them.

So how they come to me?
They, they come out of /

out of the blue

out of meditation

out of nowhere

I was, looking at active breathwork, which is a sort of a psychotropic way of, you know, or anything from going on silent retreats. Em, all those things that just come to me as something that I just have a, /
sense, there's just a feeling, but they're very weak signals at the time, because /
people aren't talking about them.

So how they come to me?
They, they come out of / they kind of come out of nowhere.

So, it's just like I, /

see the future

know things before they happen

I was, looking at active breathwork, which is a sort of a psychotropic way of, you know, or anything from going on silent retreats. Em, all those things that just come to me as something that I just have a, /
sense, there's just a feeling, but they're very weak signals at the time, because /
people aren't talking about them.

So how they come to me?
They, they come out of / they kind of come out of nowhere.

So, it's just like I, / there's a sort of sixth sense that makes me go, /

I want to do it

makes me go ahead

I was, looking at active breathwork, which is a sort of a psychotropic way of, you know, or anything from going on silent retreats. Em, all those things that just come to me as something that I just have a, /
sense, there's just a feeling, but they're very weak signals at the time, because /
people aren't talking about them.

So how they come to me?
They, they come out of / they kind of come out of nowhere.

So, it's just like I, / there's a sort of sixth sense that makes me go, /
'Oh that's', em, and somehow it kind of, I get, there's little bit of a /

Premonition

drawn to things

I was, looking at active breathwork, which is a sort of a psychotropic way of, you know, or anything from going on silent retreats. Em, all those things that just come to me as something that I just have a, /
sense, there's just a feeling, but they're very weak signals at the time, because /
people aren't talking about them.

So how they come to me?
They, they come out of / they kind of come out of nowhere.

So, it's just like I, / there's a sort of sixth sense that makes me go, /

> **'Oh that's', em, and somehow it kind of, I get, there's little bit of a / pull to it, and then sometimes I, quite a lot of the time, I just allowed the voice that wants to speak to kind of /**
>
> lead me
>
> make my decisions
>
> be guided by it

As Wengraf (2001) sets out, the purpose of this future-blind interpreting is to reduce the effects of blind-spots as well as indicating the limits of the researchers own ignorance and subjectivity. Each chunk is presented to the group and their feedback recorded before moving on to the next chunk. These future-blind panels, along with supervision and reflexivity journal helped make use of different subjectivities as a way of triangulating the data interpreted.

<u>Grounded theory</u>

The data generated by Stage 1 of the BNIM process (see Figure 1), was analysed using Grounded Theory set out by Glaser and Strauss (1967), a method of rigorously coding data through increasing levels of abstraction, from code to focused codes, category, and to concept. Whilst trying to remain open to all possible theoretical directions within the data (Charmaz 2006). Initially I read the transcript, making notes in the margins and use of Post-it notes. Then dividing the page in half, this again in a more structured manner as in the example below;

So, I wanted to be a scientist. And I, I was fascinated by science, I was frustrated by the	Early ideal of self, connected to future self.

fact that I was from a family of, you know, looked back through the years, they were either lawyers or artists. And, and ah, I certainly felt braided, I didn't, I struggled to connect with the artistic side of, of kind of my family.	Frustrated by system hindering desires to understand and make sense of internal workings.
	Hindsight used to view whole picture.
Em, and em, you know, some of them are very successful, writers or set designers or things like that, you know, and, em ah, [00:07:00] I used to always complain, you know, **why are there no scientists** in this family, you know, who are kindred spirits.	Concerns about fitting in, feeling at the edge of things, 'braided' being the edge of garment, but also a sand burdened river flow. Wish to connect with other.
	Exceptional people
	Conflict of ideas, others make things up and entertain, he takes things apart to understand.
	Loneliness of not being met by like-minded others, at odds within the system.
And I think that made me, started to make me quite self-sufficient. I think another thing that was relevant was, I think, I think I had a very strong sense of, of my spirituality, or rather, (1 sec.) my own version of that.	Self-reliance as unconscious defence against sense of alienation
	Internal sense making model of containment.
Ah, from a very early age, as in, I was, I was very clear that I was an atheist from a very early age, you know, ah, I mean, my, my parents had a slightly complicated attitude. Well, both of them in the end kind of fell out	Need for control of direction, to have view accepted at start.

with religion in different ways, but, but I remember being coerced into going to church, you know, when I was very young, and until I put my foot down, an' said, I'm not going anymore. I'm sorry. You know, it's not for me, you know, I em and I don't know how old I was, then I might have been, I don't know, five or six.	Parents ambivalent relationship with establishment, independent differing world views, lack of cohesion. Rebellion around being subsumed by other. Rejection of invite into system. Extraordinary independent thinking at an early age.
And em, [*] I said, 'I don't believe in God, sorry'. You know, and I think em, (3 sec.) [00:08:00] ah, (1 sec.) and that is that is relevant to your question, because, (2 sec.) once again, I think I've had a very, I think I've been very self-sufficient in terms of my view, of how the universe works.	Removal of God from the equation of how the world is viewed. Distancing God from source of the uncanny and mystical. Defended position, need to make own mind up with self-constructed universe.
And I think over time though, the funny thing is, I have developed my own model of the weird ways in which the universe works. And that definitely comes into my view of leadership, you know, and my view of how you behave with people and, and, you know, how you treat people. Em, I, so, although I'm, I remain, you know, a dyed in the wool	Looking back with humour, a defence against hardship of developing alternative model of thinking, when viewed externally as weird. Model of universe incorporated into leadership thinking and interactions with other parts of the system

atheist. Em, [*] that doesn't mean to say, I don't think that there are some, are some very strange, serendipitous, things at play, you know.	Reinforcement of Godless universe idea, but awareness of 'other' forces at play. Curiosity to understand edge conditions, a speculative stance.
It sounds sort of seemingly affable, [00:09:00] and maybe it's just a frame of reference. Maybe it's just a convenient way of understanding, you know, ah, things that, ah, anyway. So, I'm going to try and stay on the beaten track.	Awareness model may seem unsettling, but awareness of danger of void in not taking the established model as expected. Path less travelled. Wish to say more but stepping back from saying. Conflict between two paths.

I had considered software apps, spreadsheets, etc. but having tested these, they felt too much to be about the software's needs and constructions. There was no space to doodle or to draw connections across text, with no way to look at the text, as Wengraf suggests, like a stage script open to alternative direction. The example below shows a second run through with the page split in two. The move from scribbling to typing offering more codes and focused codes.

Memos were also used to take the initial coding into categories or 'typologies'. These memos included all streams of thoughts and feelings during the process of coding and as Strauss and Corbin (1998) suggest, by themselves are important documents in recording directions of the research and interpretive data. I found 6" x 4" index cards, dated and numbered stamped to be extremely useful in this regard. Blank cards strewn throughout the house to catch any emergences and untamed thoughts. While messy, and at times difficult to marshal, they were

tactile and lead to further cross-linking and abstractions. An example of second stage coding is shown below.

Transcript	Initial coding	Typology / Category
As a turn-up from work, when you know that your organisation (1 sec.) thinks so little of you, it's quite soul destroying. Em *, an' at that time because I was in charge of a, of the analytical serves, I had to leave the or', my part of the organisation through a, em (1 sec.) redundancy programme. Em which I did really well, I took us down from 100 to 70 people, em, with only one compulsory redundancy. Which I though was quite a successful outcome	**Global evaluation.** Whole of organisation turning against employees, an attack the containing other. **Rational Evaluation.** Irrationality of change causing damage to core idea of leadership **Argumentation.** Being forced to choose to leave or lead group through shedding of people to preserve leadership ideal. **Local Evaluation.** Triumph over situation at group level, defence against trauma of organisational downsizing	**Overall Category: Death** **Sub group: Rupture** experience of unknown emergent reality **Sub group:** **Individual Defence** use of role as defence against rapid change in establishment **Sub group:** **Individual Defence** use of task as defence against existential anxiety **Sub group:** **Organisational Defence** Cutting as defence against chaotic external environment, need to take control.

Case studies and Cross case analysis

Participant interviews did not follow a neat schedule of timing and there were temptations to start cross case analysis with three or four cases, when potential interviews were still only possibilities. However, this was avoided, at least consciously, as this could have influenced future interviews. Only initial coding was completed until all the transcripts were available. When all the case studies were complete, they were analysed as a group, which led to further generalised categories emerging. Through the process of comparison, this in turn led to an attempt to diagram the underlying process. Whilst not as linear as the diagram might suggest, it enabled playing with the ideas and connectivity. This flow diagram is shown in research journal extracts in Appendix C.

Chapter 6

Findings introduction

Before journeying into the findings, there are a number of resources which emerge as being needed that were not apparent at the beginning of the research. These additional definitions and clarifications are intended to give deference to the founding authors of theories which can at times seem overlapping and alien in understanding the leader's use of the uncanny and mystical.

The first of these is the uncanny and the mystical themselves as labels. At times they felt too overwrought as terms which can be used too widely and without embodying their real value, to unsettle and inspire. As Bion (1974:87) remarked, '*the technical term gets worn away and turns into a kind of worn out coin which has lost its value'*. So while initially I reduced these labels to the initials UM, as a matter of expediency, I subsequently realised that to draw the meaning back closer to the primal state of terror and awe, a symbol might better serve to represent this depth of uncertainty and irrationality.

A single symbol might do more than the words uncanny and mystical, its presence introducing a disruption to the sense of familiarity and certainty. Something 'other' might emerge in the mind of the reader by the disruption to the orderly flow of the eye, the heimlich of a familiar language becoming momentarily unheimlich in the disruptive encounter of the unknown symbol. As Freud (1919) suggested, it is the disruption to the familiar by something that is close to familiar and long ago alienated, that leads to revealing what should have remained hidden.

However, Freud (1919) in attempting to define the qualities of uncanny proposed that they were more than merely the sensation of unhomely. Freud found the uncanny to be rooted in

horror, fear, and repulsion. Feelings akin to the dread at the edge of a primordial forest. Also, the struggle with the ineffable qualities of the mystical in the works of Freud, Klein, Bion, Bollas, and others, as explored in Bar Nes (2022), highlights how difficult definition can be.

The symbol �ﮟ therefore attempts to acknowledge the falsehood of definition and seeks to emphasise the need to struggle with understanding for the unknown emergence to remain possible.

I am therefore indebted to the 1840 works of Rev. James Evans on Cree syllabary and Younging (2018) on considering the indigenous peoples of Canada, as well as Bion's (1963) experimental use of mathematical notation as symbol. These mathematical meanderings led to using the symbol ﮟ to metaphorically remint the coin so to speak. The symbol is used throughout and simply tries to capture the essence of the uncanny and mystical relationship open to the unconscious origins. The use of symbolic play being taken from Klein's (1932) early work, as a means of exploring what can often not be spoken to directly. The function of symbolic formation being a significant resource in this research. In addition Figilo (2017) helped in understanding the function of mathematical and scientific notation used to contain uncertainty within the known.

Another key theoretical element is the idea of containment. By this I am directly referring to Bion's (1962) concept, along with the work of Winnicott (1971), regarding the containment and moderation of unconscious anxieties, contained and digested unconsciously by a mother, in the child - mother dyad. Terror therefore being returned to the child in a more manageable form, which enables thinking. It is this sense of containment offered in the holding relationship that is of use here, thinking about the leader in the group or organisation.

There is also the use of Armstrong's (2005) organisation-in-the-mind, the invisible effect on the individual's psyche simply by being in an organisation. The shadow cast on thinking that results from having a representation of the organisation in the mind. This concept is used alongside the works of Bion (1985) and Hoggett (2018) on the internal function of 'the establishment', an agency with the aim of preventing questioning or thinking, embedded in the unconscious agreement of being led. This establishment in the mind is the anathema to new ideas, springing from Freud's (1922) death instinct.

It is this wish for a sense of contentment provided by roles with the external organisation, policed internally by the establishment, that is a source of potential conflict leading to the need of alternative resource, the formation of the superordinate object (hereafter referred to as SO). The SO being the result of symbol formation, to instigate an inner object which can provide a resource that is found lacking from the external environment.

The findings that follow are based on the participant's narratives, Biographical Data Chronology and Thematic Analysis which are contained along with the pen portraits of each participant in Appendices D-K.

The names and details of the participants are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Participant details

ID	Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Role	Sector
P1	Amy	Female	50	Head Teacher	Public
P2	Kevin	Male	62	Local Authority Lead	Public
P3	Steve	Male	51	Civil Servant / Church Minister	Public / Third
P4	Trevor	Male	54	CEO, Engineering Management Consultants	Private
P5	Brian	Male	51	CTO, Robotics Development	Private
P6	Cathy	Female	56	MD, Corporate Services	Private
P7	Peter	Male	59	Principal, Private Wealth Services	Private
P8	Linda	Female	49	NHS, Team Leader	Public

The three chapters that follow are ordered by the seven primary categories, in what became an overarching process emerging from the data. The full exploratory process is detailed in Appendix C, with a summary guide shown in Figure 2. below.

Figure 2. Overview of findings
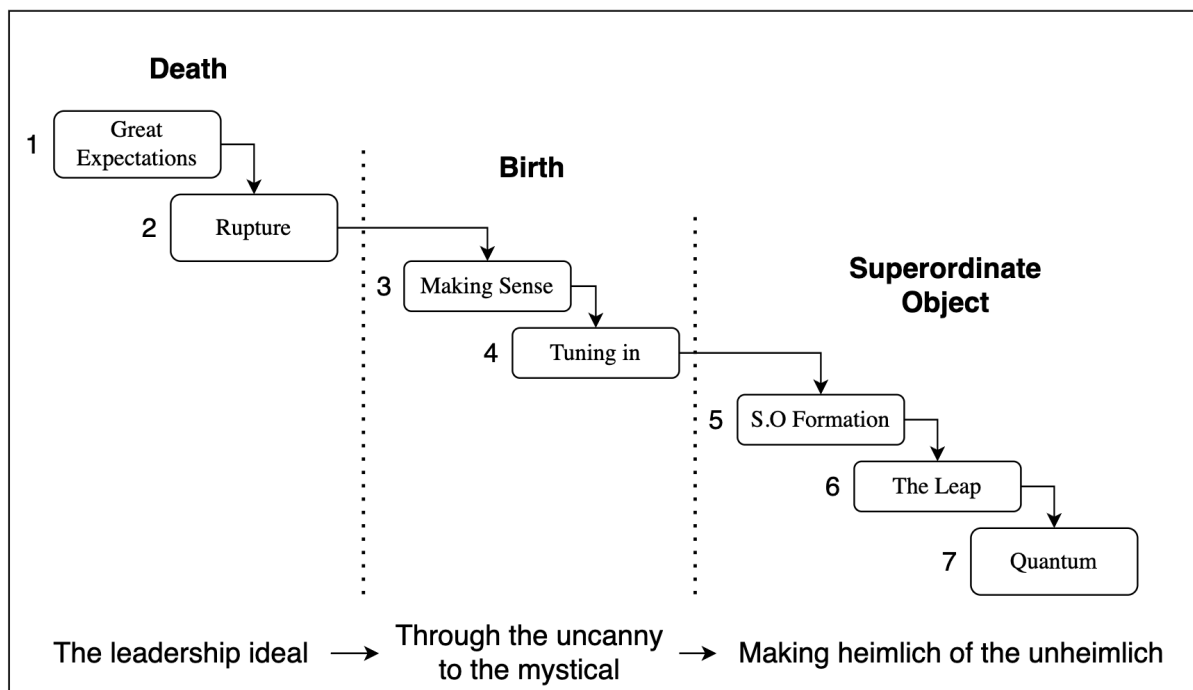
The findings follow the route from the great expectations of the participants, to the rupturing of their world view as leaders, the 'death blow' to their existing paradigm. This then lead to the need to make sense of their experience and by degrees an opening up or 'tuning in' to the uncanny and mystical in their thinking as a leader. The result of this thinking, for some, lead to the formation of a Superordinate Object, a permanent impact on their thinking which some actively imported back into their organisations.

Each of these codes will be looked at, highlighting the emergent findings that both supported and contested the original hypothesis, that an uncanny and mystical experience might bring novel leadership thinking into a system, but being resisted because it challenges the stasis of the dominant world view.

Chapter 7

The leadership ideal

Systems psychodynamics is a lens by which to understand organisations at a conscious and unconscious level. Furthermore it is a means of understanding the interplay between individuals and groups within the organisation, along with the relationship to the external environment. Organisational systems offer, to varying degrees, a psychological containment for the individual and group. However, there are also expectations that arise from being within a system.

With the eight participants an early emergent sub theme was the expectation to lead, from the systems they were part of. Sometimes this was very explicitly stated, such as with Amy, her mother's repeated tenant was *'you lead and others will follow'*. Whereas with others it was more an unspoken expectation. For example, Kevin's parents put him forward towards secondary education via the 11+ entrance exam, the expectation being that the social system for leaders would be to have attended a good school, leading on to a good university. Trevor demonstrated a good fit for his family's expectations, his father was a practical man who did well in business and Trevor achieved his leadership because of his practical background and *'business mind'*, as well as having his university education supported by the containing organisation. A university system being expected, in the wider context, to produce expertise and leadership in various fields.

However, as Brian describes using the metaphor of impedance matching between electrical systems, if the expectation or loading is too great or small from one system, it can damage the adjoining system. There is therefore, a need to have some balance of forces, encouraging or

resistant to energy flow, in order for expectations of output to be met. Trevor could be said to have met and done very well within the containing organisations of his family, the education system, and the corporate organisation where he was now CEO as a result of good impedance match. The system in an environment which coincidently expanding during his formative graduate years, so when he pushed outside his *'comfort zone'*, career opportunities were *'never far away'*. A situation reminiscent of an infant and mother reverie explored by Bion (1962), applied at an organisational level.

The mirror opposite could be said of Peter's early development situation. His parents were living at the very edge of existence, with the high expectation for him to leave school and bring home a wage. While the educational system had low expectations, placing him in a class bordering on remedial. Peter was forced therefore to become a self-reliant system, fighting to nourish himself, physically and academically, which could be thought of as a reflection of the bigger environmental picture of the time. The context being the deprivation in London in the 60s and 70s. A time of disaffected youth reacting to austerity and the emergent subcultures such as the skinheads, whom Peter physically fought. Peter's worldview of society being at odds with the picture of the swinging 60s and the blooming consumeristic middle-class.

This then brings us to the tensions caused, not from the failure of the individual or the failure of the containing organisation, such as family, group, or state, but the failure of the container to expand to the expectation of the individual. This is graphically described by Amy in her career progression as a teacher. Amy describes on more than one occasion feeling 'like Alice', a reference to Lewis Carrol's 'Alice in Wonderland'. Her wishes to grow were restricted by the ideological structures of the educational system, such that she felt her *'arms and legs to be sticking outside of the building'*, where the *'heavies'* where sent to make her conform to the

governing expectations. An example of what Bion (1985) describes as the mystic coming into contact with the establishment.

It is important to understand how these findings of great expectation are relevant to the uncanny and mystical influence on thinking in leadership and not simply the tensions present within any complex system. To a degree, it is true that times of austerity might be seen to breed discontentment and revolutionary reactions towards the dominant system. At the same time education institutions, seen to be of a high standard, would have greater expectations of students and delivery of high quality output.

Yet this lead to the emergence of a common thread which was not well voiced in the participants, their expectations of greatness? While the participants were in senior positions of leadership and successful in their own fields, their ways of thinking were not always supported within their containing organisation. In many ways, this question of great expectations, internal and external, conscious, and unconscious, and how they were met within the containing organisation was crucial to how the uncanny and mystical experience was viewed and utilised. Also how such thinking was invited or defended against in the prevailing nature of an organisation's leadership ideal.

For example Brian's restless curiosity was not well met by an organisation he felt wished to use him as a pioneer to change the prevailing MBA 'laddish' culture. A role which Brian saw as a crusade he was not prepared to take on, it was not a fit for his thinking.   The tension created by such great expectations within a complex system was found amongst all the participants, to varying degrees, to be the prelude to how the uncanny and mystical was received and of what use it was for the individual as a leader in the organisation.

Although there was clear evidence of the expectation from the participant's containing organisations, which influenced their thinking, there was also how the individual saw themselves. While all felt an impetus to lead, there were a number of participants who from an early age considered themselves outside the normal leadership trajectory. They felt themselves exceptional in regard to their surroundings, appearing to be in command of their destiny, and outside of any organisational restrictions. These individuals, Amy, Brian, Cathy and Peter appeared to form a type, who from the outset had big plans, bigger than the containing systems knew what to do with.

Whereas the other type of leaders, Kevin, Steve and Trevor appeared to be on very much on well-worn tracks, with clearly marked hierarchies. This was not to say that they did not succeed, many received very high accolades, but where they were going was from the outset very much defined by the organisations they worked in. The career steps taken were sequential, were quite predictable, involving less risk and anxiety. There are exceptions, such as Linda appeared to have the potential to be extraordinary, but due to life events and the surrounding systems lack of support, was found to be with the more predictable type of leader.

Rupture

If we hold in mind, Freud's (1933a :158) opinion of a 'Weltanschauung' or worldview,

> *an intellectual construction which solves all the problems of our existence*
> *uniformly on the basis of one overriding hypothesis, which, accordingly,*
> *leaves no question unanswered and in which everything that interests us*
> *finds its fixed place.*

then what becomes emergent from the data, was that the participants generally had a worldview in which they are 'a leader'. Their being a leader providing equilibrium and certainty, as well

as an indication of destiny, a lens through which everything is seen and oriented by. For the participants it generally appears to have been recognised early in their psychological development. While initially, it was not so defined as being based on a scientific worldview or a religious worldview for example, it was simply stated that they were true to their self in being 'a leader'.

However, where this leadership centric view was perceived to originate from varied. For some, there was a clear sense it was a natural thing, being present without need to be questioned, Trevor going as far as to say it was a simple matter of genetics, a *'gift'* of his DNA .

> *Erm, I've aways been a leader in my own domain. Always considered myself to be a leader, I've never worried what other people have done.*
>
> Amy

> *I think a lot of my leadership style is natural. I think it, I think it, it's hard not to be who you are and succeed, so I think it's, it. I think if people try to be something they're not that's doomed to be a failure.*
>
> *I've got the right ingredients to lead from somewhere. Em, don't know where from, who knows.*
>
> Steve

Yet leadership for some participants, their sense of self as a leader, was felt to be more consciously constructed from an accretion of experience and knowledge over time.

> *I use many parts of myself and those parts have been forged over time, through all sorts of life experiences, you know. Em, it's perhaps one of the reasons why I think it's really difficult to fast track leadership*
>
> Brian

the leadership comes out of thee, thee, thee, em, (3 sec.) if you like, em, the
self, self-beliefs, self-esteem, but also integrity. (2 sec.) I think because
without that, again,   there's not, there's, there's nothing.

Peter

These participant worldviews as leaders, however formed, did not exist within a vacuum. They were supported and contained within the complex systems with which the individual was a part. Yet generally, with one notable exception, there occurred a rupture or ruptures to that worldview. A rupture in the context of their containing organisation, which significantly impacted on their thinking regarding their leadership.

The types of rupture that introduced uncertainty to their world views were found to vary in frequency, intensity, and impact. For some participants the ruptures were experienced as singular, intense and traumatic in nature. Steve, for example, spoke for more than two hours on the uncanny and mystical in relation to the significant impact of an incoming *'austerity government'*. A *'turn'* in the organisation which saw his worldview of leadership in the civil service, a view he thought critical to government, being overnight distrusted and ideologically redundant.

so then the government rhetoric in the period was changed from the pretence
that they hated us, to a genuine dislike of us...

...a turn-up from work, when you know that your organisation thinks so little
of you, it's quite soul destroying

Steve

What was once his leadership heimlich, became very unheimlich, an uncanny event, but one which was experienced as a great deal more than a temporary unsettling view. A blow for this participant which forced his re-examination of how both state and church used leadership. A singular rupture of negative impact which took years to make sense of and come to terms with.

Indeed the rupture for a participant could be literally a singular moment in time, as in the case of Linda. For her, a single shove of another eight-year-old in the playground, someone who wished to join her group, resulted in the instant death of her leadership worldview.

> *I think the hour spent by myself in the headmaster's office, thinking that I've murdered someone. [exhale] I can't honestly, remember now exactly what I was thinking.*
>
> *But it was during that hour, that **gut churning** hour, that I thought I'm never going to be like that, again. I'm making a conscious decision now.*
> *Not to be like that again...*
>
> *I wasn't leader anymore.*

<div align="right">Amy</div>

However for other participants, the singularity and intensity of the rupture was not necessarily experienced as negative. The rupture that particularly influenced Brian's thinking was a *'serendipitous'* phone call *'out of the blue'*, at a time when he was feeling *'a little bit lost'*, which was felt to be very profound, but not traumatic. If anything, the experience was for him more revelationary in nature and described as akin to the euphoria of falling in love. A *'love affair'* for him lasting for 14 years and becoming more complex over time.

Yet five of the eight participants could be identified as having more than one rupture, multiple ruptures with varying degrees of impact, where it was hard to identify a single moment that changed things. These participants appeared to *'deal with it'* in the moment, but formed a pattern from rupture experiences over time that made them start to question things. Amy for instance, after a number of blows to her leadership aspirations, started to think there must be more to it than simply being thwarted by the system.

> *because I think that's been a pattern, that to me is odd, 'cause that hasn't happened just once or twice that has been a consistent pattern all the way through my life.*

<div align="right">Amy</div>

Another participant also had a series of intense ruptures. Cathy, was firstly diagnosed with cancer during her university years and then was impacted by the death of her beloved grandmother a few year later. Both of these causing a serious disruption to the certainty of herself as a leader. Yet she re-joined the expected career path towards a high leadership position in finance, having appeared to have dealt with things quite quickly. However, in the background she began searching, in response to an insistent need to be with people who sensed there was *'something more'*.

The thread that seems to link these rupture events, whatever the frequency, intensity or duration, was that the impact led to a moment or a period of deep uncertainty and unknowing which required a making sense of. Whether it was the system, the organisation or the random events of life that impacted on the participant, the outcome was the creation of a need, followed by a period of searching.

The first two primary categories, great expectations and rupture, therefore could be thought of as the ignition of a need for new thinking when the existing worldview has been called into

question. It could be thought of as the pre uncanny and mystical, the rupture leading to the death of an existing knowing, but also the possibility of birth of the new in that space of unknowing. With the participants' existing world views effectively breached, the exception being Trevor, there began a search for meaning.

Yet the key finding from the rupture of the leaders' worldview was that it was not an uncanny or mystical event which caused the rupture, but much more predictable psychosocial factors.

Chapter 8

Through the uncanny to the mystical

<u>Sense making</u>

Having identified the nature of the ruptures to the participants' worldview, it would be useful to understand how such impacts were made sense of in relation to the uncanny and mystical. Figure 3. below aims to encapsulate the conceptual levels, the influences considered in the participants' thinking.

<u>Figure 3. Influences on thinking</u>
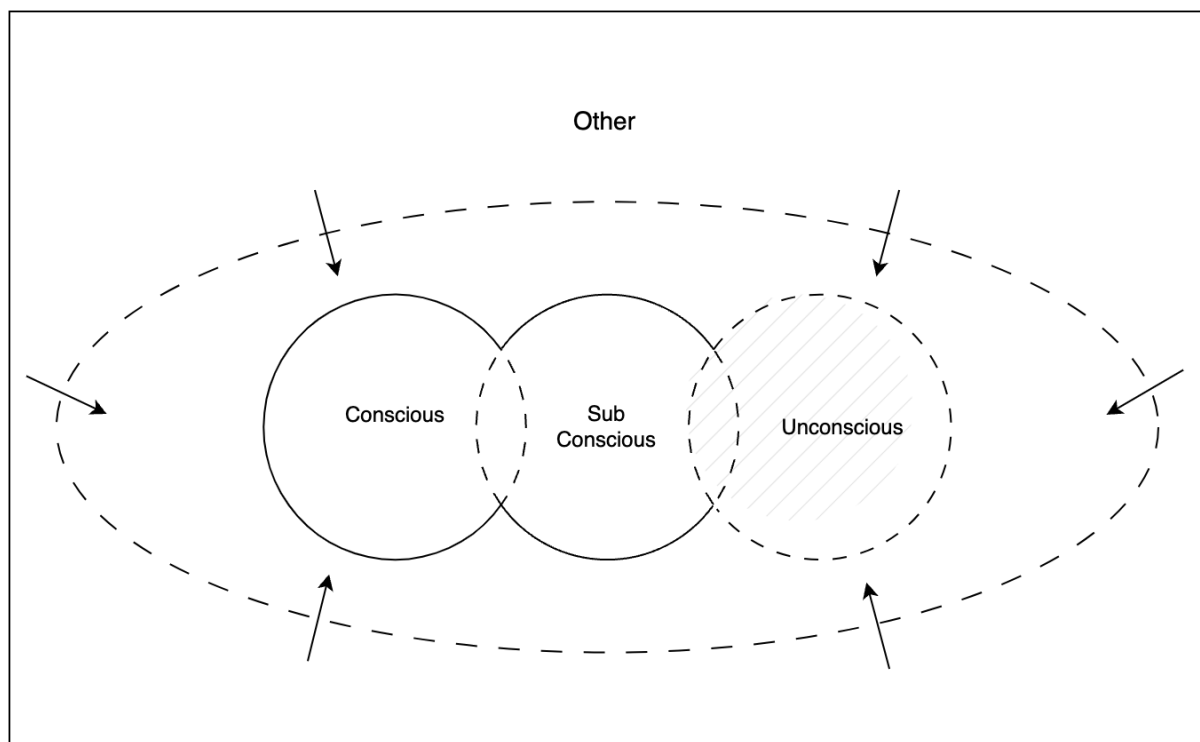
The finding which in a way sets the benchmark for the antithesis of uncanny and mystical influence on thinking was found in the case of Trevor. Indeed, the words uncanny or mystical did not appear in any of his data, although *'business'* was mentioned over 70 times. Making

sense of the unexpected or senseless for Trevor, who felt it was wholly located in the conscious level of thinking, focused on the conscious use of a *'business sense'* and the creation of an appropriate *'organisational structure'*.

Trevor saw his role as being to *'unravel the noise'* getting down to the actual *'component parts'*, to *'the facts'* of the rupture experience. Then to deal with the unknown, by breaking things down into *'manageable chunks'*, creating an action plan. This being the *'logical way'* of dealing with things to reach a sensible business conclusion. The *'noise'* encountered in this process being identified as of an emotional nature, causing conflicting views where different sides saw things through *'completely different lenses'* resulting in misinterpretation, particularly in times of bad news. In his thinking these *'emotional swings'* were felt to serve no purpose, with the focus being to look for *'positives out of the negative'*, to find the *'silver lining'* from a business perspective.

The Emotional aspects of the unexpected or unknown were simply not seen as helpful to this business sense, whose primary aim is founded on logic, with the organisational survival and expansion being paramount. Trevor's total focus being on what Rice (1963) termed the 'primary task'. In his view there was effectively no room for uncanny or mystical in decision-making or sense making. Making a decision based 'on a hunch' or something 'other' would be deemed as simply irrational. The *'engineering mindset'* for him was to *'work everything out',* or to *'tune out'* the idea of something uncanny, mystical, or other. There was little if any evidence to suggest recognition of potential useful influences that might be 'other' in relation to the established logical thought process.

After logically *'unravelling the noise'*, there was some acknowledgement that there may be things left outside of organisational control, but they were simply to be mastered where

possible. In the event of loss or disappointment, there was no data suggesting grieving or shame being acknowledged or permitted within Trevor's worldview. Failures of reason became simply lessons learnt for the future *'re-architecting'* of the organisation, in order to meet the external environment.

In some ways, it would appear that Trevor's sense of containment, even during turbulent times, when at an individual level one might expect to experience uncertainty in their organisational structures, was due to his absolute belief in the idea of how '*business*' makes sense of the world. Trevor's organisation-in-the-mind, the unconscious influence of the organisation on thinking, a concept formed by Armstrong (2005), closely mirroring the external establishment.

Yet there was some evidence in his opening words regarding the use of two recording devices, *'it would be funny if they were different'*, that would indicate at least some small degree of curiosity towards the uncanny and mystical, but not something that would find expression in the world of business. Yet, the fact that the participant took part in the interview, as CEO, itself would suggest that while he may represent a polar position in the group of eight participants, the organisation which he represents was prepared to entertain the existence of the uncanny and mystical at some level.

However, for other participants, the revelations emerging from the sudden change in the sense of organisational containment resulted in a 'stripping away', which could not be answered logically and formed a need.

Steve, a senior civil servant, and church leader, saw the 'bogeyman' of a new austerity government completely upending the very basis of his belief in leadership and being a leader. The personal impact for him was very clear.

So, someone I've never even met in my life, (2 sec.) changed my life. Em and changed the way I think about everything, made me question my own faith and whether it was valid or not. Em, so got me right down to depths of human despair if you like, in that, is my faith valid, is my work valid, what's going on in my life?

Steve

The initial need for making sense of things, the response to this unexpected 'stripping away', was typical across all the remaining participants to some degree. It was found to have much in common with the responses to grief. This was acutely evident with Steve and Linda, where once their containing sense of self was suddenly and unexpectedly torn away, leading to them to being in what Steve refers to as *'not easy territory'*, a thought process of *'almost madness'* pondering what makes sense, having experienced such a loss of identity as a leader.

This grief response to the loss of leadership identity was experienced even when the participant wasn't yet a leader. Simply the temporary lost idea of being a leader in the future, appeared to be enough to cause symptoms of grief in the participant. For example, Kevin failing his 11+ and the future *'crown'* of leadership unexpectedly put in doubt, caused a deep sense of loss. The loss evidently felt even years later, despite becoming a much decorated leader. As Freud (1917) suggested in his paper on 'mourning and melancholia', the loss of an idea could be felt as deeply as a physical loss.

This theme of grief, also highlighted a key finding, that it wasn't the uncanny or mystical which caused the initial 'dawning' awareness to an 'other', thereby leading to a potential change in leadership thinking, as had been my initial hypothesis. It was in fact, from the group analysed, the other way around. In the wake of a collapse in system containment, it would appear grief

had the potential to open the participant to reflection and consideration of 'other', including the uncanny and mystical. It would be important to note that both Steve and Linda had strong underlying religious beliefs, but these systems were also seen as failing, being 'man made' institutions.

With grief came a sense of the bewilderment, brought on by shock, a sense of being nowhere, poignantly captured by Linda's experience *'to exist without existing'*. If we use the model created by Kübler-Ross (1969) in her seminal work, *'on death and dying'*, the five stages of grief were easily evidenced throughout the data, but it is the early uncanny experience of not being oneself, that was of particular relevance.

Steve, for instance, describes *'putting on a face'* so that he could remain in the organisation while he was soul-searching, but it was in this turbulent transitional space that he saw a connecting series of fortunate 'unexpected events', coincidences, and luck, by which he navigated to make sense of that unknown self, until he could return to being his old self in a new organisation. In a way, he saw a boogie man in himself, because he could not recognise himself anymore, having risked too much of himself in a failing organisation.

Amy also identifies with this sense of risk in becoming over identified with a leadership role in an organisation, that there is a cost to those *'processes and procedures'* done without thinking. Almost as if the true self could become obliterated by the role, the impingement of the establishment leading to internal displacement.

> *So, it's very difficult then to identify, where you as a person stop and where*
> *your role begins because over time, you almost, that almost becomes part of*
> *your personality 'cause you're doing it, all the time. So, to not do it, doesn't*
> *feel right, you know.*

This displaced sense of being, being unheimlich in the self and uncontained in the organisation, appeared to result in being more sensitive, or at least more open to noticing what was 'odd', but in plain sight. Brian, for example, saw death close to him on various occasions, the unexpected death of a business partner, the deaths in a skiing group he was meant to be part of and struggling with the premature birth of his child, which left him lost in himself, feeling adrift.

It was at this point for him where the strange uncanny *'out of the blue'* call appeared with an offer, which made no sense in hearing and made no sense to accept, but it became the object of a new love. A new heimlich emerged, where his oddness was not only accepted but pivotal to new creative thinking. It was an organisation intentionally built to contain the messy gestation and the emergence of new ideas. The ﺵ effectively provided a new meaning and a fuller identity for him as a leader in response to the unsettling of his grief.

For some participants then, the rupture to their thinking, brought about by a tear in the fabric of organisational containment, was responded to in a way that was akin to grief. Participants temporarily became interested in the difficult to access parts of the self, the subconscious, the 'other', the possibility of an organising force referred to as 'the universe' or a universal energy outside of the conscious self. However for some such as Kevin and Steve it would appear that having used the sense of mystical and uncanny during that time as part of the transitional process, that it was then discarded.

This then leads us to consider the next level in terms of participant engagement or use of the uncanny and mystical. That being the idea of going beyond tuning out *'noise'*, or the temporary use of *'other'* in the grieving of a lost or displaced self, to a consideration of *'tuning in'* to the

signals beyond the noise of business. For some, the rupture resulted in the desire to better understand the 'other' and how that might help contain their leadership, give them greater authority, and offer a sense of destiny beyond the existing paradigm, by incorporating the uncanny and the mystical.

Tuning in to the uncanny and mystical

From the data gathered, the participants who were most influenced by the uncanny and mystical in their thinking, were those who took it beyond a component of grief. They effectively *'tuned in'* to the *'other'*, as opposed to the approach of *'unravelling'* what was thought of as useless *'noise'*. The participants were found to effectively fall into three groups, those who saw no recognition of *'other'*, those who recognised something but were limited by the dominant organisational principal, and those who wished to reach out beyond logic, in need of 'something more' which incorporated the uncanny and mystical in their thinking.

Strictly speaking with the eight participants interviewed, the first of the three groups would only consist of Trevor, and as a single participant might not be strictly considered a group. However, whilst he might be thought of as an outlier, in terms of considering the influence of uncanny and mystical in leadership thinking, in many ways as global CEO he might be said to represent a much wider group not present. That being the dominant culture of logic based thinking in leadership generally.

Also, Trevor's singular comment at the outset of the interview process regarding the dual recording devices, 'it would be funny if they were different', technically could be thought as a recognition of 'other'. However, for the sake of argument, and the fact this participant was particularly representative of a rationality focused school of thinking, he is going to be

considered a group in this discussion. Figure 4. places the three groups in relation to the 'tuning in' to 'other' and will be referred to whilst looking at the findings from the three groups.

The first group appears to represent an important finding, that for them there is an absolute belief in the canny, the shrewdness in business symbolised by getting to the facts beneath the emotional noise. This canniness is emblematic of a sense of security and containment provided by the knowing of business sense. In their view, it is the collection of experts and professionals drawn together to consider the 'component parts' of any problem, which form leadership thinking. Anything else goes against that establishment.

Figure 4. The pool of the ش
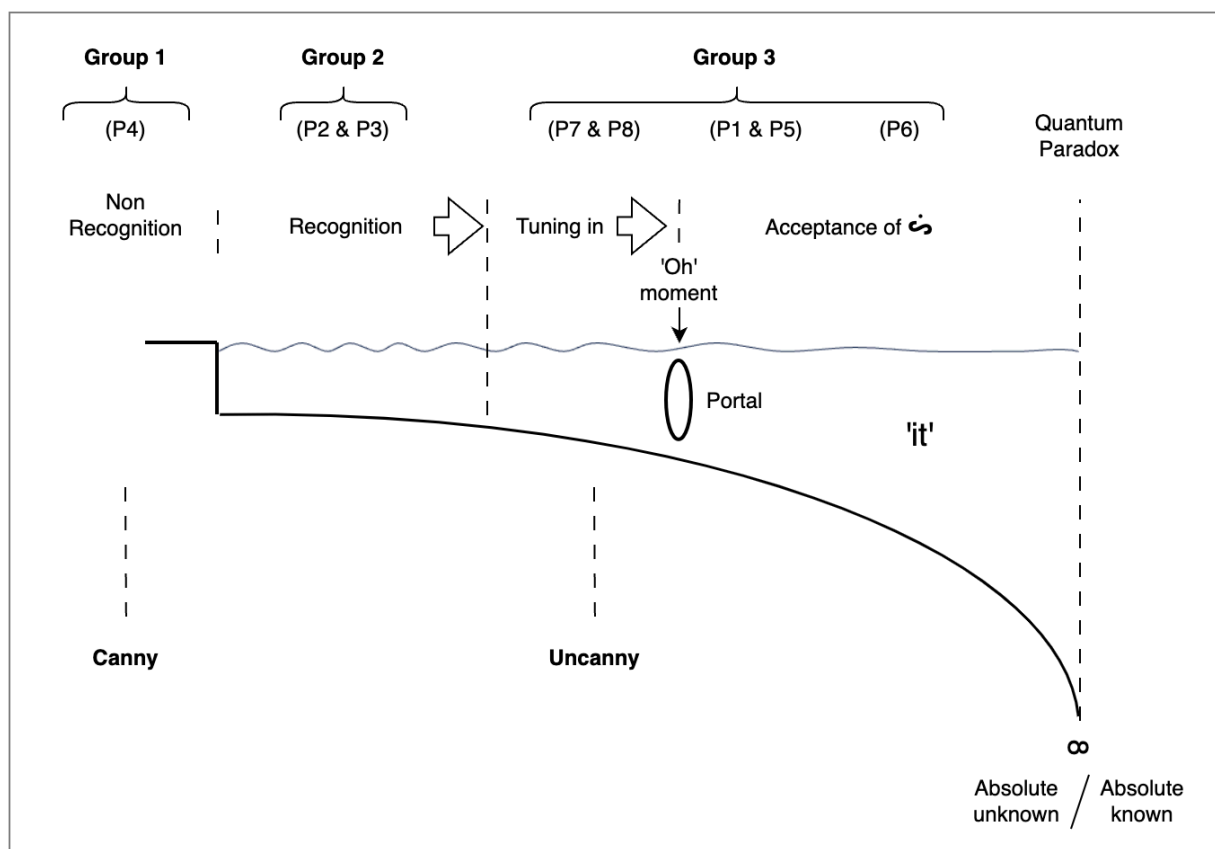
Trevor actually suggests his *'business sense'*, was something of an *'instinct'*, the gift of a *'good listening ear'* in helping him get *'under the skin'* of a situation. However, when the idea of 'gift' was focused on in the second part of the interview process, he was quick to add that it simply was part of his DNA. For him at least, the listening was a natural talent, it was he who was doing the listening, from a point not subject to the noise of emotional distraction, so as to help others.

This type of leadership thinking, based on a logic of something being either A or B logic, founded on known facts, was also as important for the participants in Group 3, who are towards the deepest end of the metaphorical pool of uncanny and mystical thinking in Figure 4. above. As Brian demonstrated, if one had an intuition to fly off the edge of a building, then the knowledge of physics was going to suggest it was not good sense. The binary sense making process of yes/no and risk evaluation, would be used to decide no, it was not a good idea.

The second group, were those who appeared to recognise the potential of uncanny and mystical aspects in their leadership but were not certain that they were not just aspects of a good leader. Steve, for instance, found himself, listening to *'noises'* and *'murmurings'* within the organisation which might reveal a hidden picture, an indicator of change which helped him to stay *'ahead of the game'*.

> *lots of little conversations here and there that, something's not quite right here... when you put them together it tells you a picture, but no one's telling you that picture.*
>
> Steve

However, he struggled to know if it was simply an *'active listening'*, leading to astute insight, or simply *'serendipity'*, picking up on things at the right time.

> *Em, so I guess that's a bit, would you call that the mystical or uncanny?*
> *Don't know, but it wasn't evidence based it was just a, a gut feel, instinct, judgment.*
>
> *I'm struggling in my own head now, to work out whether that's, uncanny mystical or whether that's just bog-standard good planning from a leader.*
>
> <div align="right">Steve</div>

Kevin also appeared to recognise that in the big picture of his career, there have been moments when the timing of *'opportunity'* has led to a *'dynamic and chemistry'* coming through that had given him confidence in making career transitions and identifying *'great things to strive for'*.

> *there's quite a few sort of **aspects** in that, in that story about things that have*
> *happened, whether they're myth, mythical or magic or, but they're just things*
> *that come along and you just have to grab them and some of it, you know,*
> *[cough] whether it's luck or not, or just being at the right place at the*
> *right time, or even just being very proactive and seizing the opportunity, I*
> *suppose.*
>
> <div align="right">Kevin</div>

However, what appears clear in this second group was that even when the timing suggests the *'stars had aligned'*, or things *'fall into place'*, it was not from any thinking or intervention on their part. Such *'fortunate incidents'* were considered as *'complete fluke'* from their perspective.

Although good luck may have led to opportunity, it was considered a matter of random emergence, happy coincidence.

Steve as a leader in the church, sees any going beyond the point defined by the established view, as totally unacceptable. The attempt for example to introduce the idea of an American style, *'health and wealth prosperity ministry'*, a combination of Christianity and capitalism was met with derision.

> *absolute baloney, a bizarre set of thinking, weird theology… cult like thinking*
>
> Steve

Such a radical change in thinking was, *'not right theologically'* and to be viciously defended against in a manner akin to his inspirational role models, Martin Luther, and Charles Spurgeon.

This second group while recognising something, even if only the curious synchronicity of encountered opportunity, appeared guided or dominated by the hierarchy or theology of the organisation. They were not prepared to entertain a shift in thinking beyond that. The uncanny and mystical could not be pre-empted, invited, or used as a potential means of decision-making. Their authority emanated from the organisational containing structure, as well as what appeared to be the dominant influence on thinking from the establishment in the mind.

This brings us to the third group, those who recognise things which are synchronistic, serendipitous, and odd, as being something beyond random chance, or the logic of the known. Linda's reflective questioning could be speaking for all of the third group.

So, I believe there's a bigger force at work here than just me (3 sec.)
and random coincidences.

It's a bigger thing that I can explain. Is it God? Is it just a random influence?
Somebody else's life influences mine, which makes me do that, or me meet this
person, or go there.

It's too, it can't, it's not random. That's what I believe, that it's not random.

Or just a set of coincidences.
Call it God, call it mystical influenced spirituality, call it what you like.
But it's not just random. (3 sec.)

<div align="right">Linda</div>

Therefore, by stating such events are not random, it also suggests incidents that first may appear as uncanny timing may be thought of as a *'coming together'* moment with an 'other' force. The seeing of patterns or moments of oddness, become a potential access to a deeper unknowing/knowing, an **'oh'** moment. What appeared critical in their way of thinking was that **'it'** was accepted as paradoxical in nature. An idea which makes no sense and is not logical but is somehow useful, meeting their needs.

At one end of the pool, there is a lot of noise, the baggage of organisational culture, the baggage of individual emotion, the listening to and tuning towards the egocentric self. As Cathy points out, this cognitive mode of thinking, is based on the logic of yes/no, me/not me. Cathy suggests this mode is the mode that we all are in, most of the time. The sense of manic thinking comes across in her description.

You know, obviously a lot of the time, you know, I'm operating on the sort of.

Yes, no, yeah, that's good proposal, yeah send it off, yeah, that's quite a good
price, yeah, yeah, I can do that. Yes, you know, no, blah, blah, blah, you know.

Cathy

The first part of this 'tuning in' is described by participants as being inexplicably *'drawn'* towards something. Their attention is prompted by something that feels odd about an everyday situation, a proposal, a word, image, daydream, even a simple object out of place.

So, I definitely felt there was something (2 sec) beyond me, beyond decisions
that I was making, beyond decisions that the local authority were making, there
was something at play that drew me here. Em, because otherwise I wouldn't
have come.

I would say, the uncanny things about it for me or the strange things, is that
this is not what I had, this is very definitely me being drawn into something I
never ever thought I would do.

Amy

You know, so it's just like I, it's a, there's a sort of sixth sense that makes me
go, 'oh that's', you know, em, and somehow it kind of, I get there's little bit of
a kind of pull, to it, and then sometimes I, I just em…

Cathy

This draw described as the attention to an 'Oh' moment, appears to be a moment which requires a *'different mindset'*, a trusting in being *'without a plan'*, something *'you really feel'*. For some, the 'Oh' moment was a sensing of a weak signal, for some a smell, a gut feeling, an intuition.

However, what was common to all was that it requires an alteration to thinking, a shift in perspective such as Bion's (1961) 'binocular vision'.

However, as Cathy points out, these odd moments are 'easily drowned out' in the noise, and the slowing down to stay in that moment of **'oh'** can feel like going against the group's tide of thought, as well as seeming to others, like procrastination or non-leading.

The 'Oh' moment is described by Cathy as *'a portal'* to *'it'*, a source of greater wisdom. Yet to stay in that moment requires the *'relinquishing of both positive and negative'* as well as being non-reactive. This need to be in an *'un-cognitive'* frame of mind, is highlighted as not being without risk.

> *But I think every now and then a little kind of Portal opens and you kind of get an insight you have to listen to that.*
>
> *I think, it's not so much mystical, but I think it's about connecting with, with one subconscious, you know, and that can appear quite mystical. Because it's, it's not in our control. It's not, you know, it is the stuff of madness. It's the stuff of dreams, it, it's very nonlinear. It has, it makes crazy connections, like we do in dreams, you know, and yet, it's incredibly powerful. I think. Does that make sense? ...*
>
> *And, and it, it feels quite out there. And quite kind of risky. And quite kind of, you know, and, and yet, you know, I trust it, and I kind of go, you know, so.*
>
> <div align="right">Brian</div>

Being at the portal, was an experience described as being like a conduit for another voice to speak, a moment that can happen at any time. Also, an experience which was described as *'bodily uncomfortable'*, even nauseating.

especially when I'm with others, em, but also on, on, on my own, I just em,
(4 sec.) [*] em, (3 sec.) I just allowed the voice that wants to speak, to kind of
*come **through me**.*

So, em, when I (2 sec.) allow that, that, you know, that, sense, to a, to have, to
have the voice really...

I want to have those conversations, I don't have snatched conversations, I want
to allow it to kind of unfold, and I don't think it's about me not making a
decision, but it's almost about, you know, letting, (2 sec.) you know, I think it's
*sort of letting (2 sec.) God's grace prevail or **some**, something like that.*

Cathy

Chapter 9

Making heimlich of the unheimlich

SO formation

All of the participants to some extent, have a Superordinate Object (SO). Even those in groups 1 and 2 have something towards which their actions and desires appear directed, something which gives a sense of equilibrium in their leadership ambitions. Kevin, for instance, was driven by the future 'crown' of directorship. Although he was very clear he did not wish to go beyond that level, since for him this would likely involve *'who gets things and who doesn't'* in the territory of child and adult social services. There was no sense of wishing to change the organisational structure or go outside the existing hierarchy.

So too with Steve and Trevor, together they were leaders who embodied business, church, and state. While they were prepared to make difficult decisions, as well as *'stand up'* and fight for their organisational values if needed, their desires were to play within the *'rules of the game'*. Steve experienced what it was to upset the system, in trying to make a radical change to the school league table system, to change a foundational algorithm. Whilst he was victorious, it was short lived, and reversed by the next cycle of government.

Group 3 however, having *'tuned into'* something *'other'* formed a new SO. Whilst each SO was unique and useful to that participant, what appeared to be a common feature was that it was considered an addition to their existing thinking. An addition formed through experiences considered as س instances, which went beyond the transition of mourning, following significant rupture to the organisational containment.

The first step in forming an SO for these Group 3 participants, was a clear recognition of something unhelpful or missing from the existing organisational structure. For example, Brian

recognised that the fast track MBA approach to leadership development, whilst a useful tool, resulted in very linear thinking. This in time potentially lead to only the organisation's way of thinking being encouraged as the means of reducing organisational risk, resulting in a deepening of the establishment. There was effectively no space to consider or experiment with the *'unthinkable'*, the things that made no logical sense to the organisational culture.

This idea of restricted thinking sometimes appeared to be based on a moral objection. For instance Amy felt that the church imposed a moral code to prevent *'primaeval responses'* to things, since people generally found it difficult to take responsibility for their actions without a higher authority. Institutionalised religion for her was experienced as being restrictive to certain ways of thinking.

Amy also evidenced this institutional thinking as restrictive by using the metaphor of 'Alice in Wonderland', where buildings and structures could not contain rapid growth. Big passions, big ideas, big thinking, were judged as mad by these organisations. Yet for her much needed expansion or system disruption, mad thinking, was what she felt to be missing in the mind of the organisation, a need for radical thinking which could not be tolerated by the establishment.

> *I can't make any more progress here really and I literally felt like I was my arms and legs and everything sticking out of the school, that there was no, em the, the framework that I was working in wasn't big enough anymore for the ideas that I had because, sh', her view of what should be happening was too narrow. So, I couldn't have em, I couldn't have carried on doing what I was doing.*
>
> Amy

However, what emerged from the data was that to form an SO, one that provided an alternative system, it might be necessary to jettison impositions, to *'shed skin'*. Participants appeared to realise that to commit to one thing often meant taking energy away from or shedding completely attachment to an existing structure and its systems of thought. Three of the four participants in this group, renounced their existing religion, with two participants adopting Buddhist teachings which were more accepting of their uncanny and mystical experiences.

Being an outliner in regard to the existing system also was found to impact on relationships. Not *'fitting in'*, and embraced *'un-cognitive thinking'*, even lead to divorce on occasion. Being at odds to the surrounding culture, with the pressure to conform, was experienced as being a *'lonely place'*.

> *Em and that looks, you know, some of the, what we do is quite scary. We do a*
> *lot of things outside the box. Em, and that as I say can be quite intimidating,*
> *em in my relationships, that role, er, it's interesting how other people*
> *perceive you, looking from the other side.*
>
> <div align="right">Amy</div>

> *So, it's like being a piece of disruptive grit in a disruptive oyster, you know,*
> *and em, and that is a, that can be a very lonely place at times, because you*
> *are always the odd one out, you're always saying the things that people*
> *don't want to hear, you're saying the things that are pushing the envelope,*
> *you're saying the things that are, em, you know, challenging to the kind of the*
> *received wisdom. Em, you're an outlier. You're a disrupter. You're a*
> *troublemaker sometimes, you know.*
>
> <div align="right">Brian</div>

Yet for most of the participants in the third group, they had an *'idea'* which justified the personal costs and uncomfortableness, they had a big vision which their SO enabled them to be more successful in pursuing. Each wished to make a substantial difference in their field, they hoped to create a paradigm shift that left permanent change. For example, Cathy had a *'big mission'* to raise the consciousness of corporations, by introducing *'un-cognitive thinking'*.

Using this mode of thinking she wished all to access a *'greater wisdom'* and cause a metamorphosis within society, where collaboration replaced competition. It is important to note that this particular participant worked at a very high level in the banking sector for many years and such thinking would be viewed by that culture as diametrically opposite to the world of numbers and ROI (return on investment) thinking.

The size of the idea appeared to be important, because participants believed such ideas in the service of others attract the *'other'*. For half of this group, it was the scale of the vision, as well as the removal of the self and shedding of skin, that appears to attract the attention of a *'universal force'*. This being the other system, which could provide a serendipitous synchronicity of events, so things 'fall into place'. These participants believed that uncanny and mystical incidents were symbols of this *'universal energy'*. A universal energy which provides a *'listening ear'*, guiding, nudging, revealing itself in relation to that big vision.

However, there were some important subtle differences in the nature of these couplings. For instance whilst Amy and Linda were aware of the synchronicity provided by *'the universe'*, an all surrounding force, they didn't make any suggestion that there was a two-way conversation with ***'it'***. They had a *'big mission'*, and the universe responded, providing timing of connections that helped develop the idea, something more than random luck.

The difference with Brian and Peter is that they believed in direct action to communicate with the subconscious. Peter going so far as to suggest that changes in thinking could be *'battered'* into the subconsciousness with conscious effort in changing attitudes and behaviour. However, to do so appeared to require 'super pos', a relentless positive attitude, which takes significant commitment and energy, often with no evidence to support or justify it. Change for Peter, it is proposed, can result from the imagination, the power of thought, as well as being in keeping with the *'law of attraction'*, that positive attracts positive.

> *So, so there's a, there's a, you know, everything is not as it seems. There's a whole world of energy, em, you know, you can probably influence things, I think you can probably influence things thought to some extent, em through being positive. The whole power of the law of attraction, all of that. So, I have no doubt there is, em, there is truth in it.*
>
> Peter

Brian, a leader at the cutting edge of robotic development, believed that placing groups and individuals together, which often make no sense on paper, deliberately causing disruption to linear thinking, provided access to subconscious knowledge. By creating a containing cauldron, removed from the normal business of the parent organisation, connections were enabled of a nonlinear nature, akin to quantum computing.

With his SO there was not so much direct communication with non-linear thinking, so much as creating the right environment. This participant was also one of the few to stress the dangers of this process. Whilst he spoke of *'sensing'* and an internal dialogue as a result of this access to the subconscious, he does not go any further than that, although he briefly states the unconscious may be involved.

> *I think it is the whole thing of once, you know, once (3 sec.) subconscious is,*

is so much more powerful, than one's conscious brain. And it's like, little
windows occasionally open, when you're awake. You know, I mean, it's
like the whole kind of system one thinking, system two thinking stuff,
you know. If you can, if you can learn to em, to tap into the power of
what your subconscious is saying to you, I think, you know.

Brian

This then brings us to the one participant who did claim to communicate with **'it'**, to give 'it' a voice. Whilst the SO of the other participants were in some way labelled, such as, universal network, system two, super pos', etc., Cathy made no such label, simply referring to a process of *'sensing into'*. What was sensed into was described as *'weak signals'* which wish to *'presence'* given sufficient time and space to *'unfold'*. This in turn for her led to *'wise'* decision making, such as predicting the timing of emergent markets. Also as a leader, such 'sensing' informed her when to *'shed skin'*, so as to reveal another iteration of self.

As this participant remarked, she could easily be dismissively labelled by others as witch like, unsettling, elusive. In some ways she symbolised uncanny itself and hinted at the mystical. For her *'miracles are everyday'*. The SO for her was the sensing gained from un-cognitive thinking, that allowed the voice of the *'other'* to pass through her directly. Cathy effectively became very close to being embodied with the 'other'. What this participant represents is the polar opposite of Trevor within the collective of eight participants. Cathy plays in the deep end of the metaphorical pool in Figure 4., she plays in the *'quantum field'*.

You know, I just have a strong belief that, you know, miracles are normal.
Em, if you, if you ask for them, and if you create the right conditions.

Em, it's really about playing the, in the 'quantum field'.
Em, where possibility resides, possibility and potential.

So em, I mean, I would just it's in, it's just in every area of my life.

Cathy

For all of the participants in the 3rd group, the formation of faith in their SO, which was illogical in the absence of any scientific evidence, appeared to contain and support them in a way their original organisational structures did not. They found themselves without the girth to breathe fully, until identifying from uncanny and mystical occurrences, the presence of another system. A system which requires commitment and the metaphorical shedding of skin, as well as at the risk of being perceived as mad, but provides a coupling which for them has led to getting close to their big vision. This then led to the moment when they made the *'leap of faith'*, trusting their SO in the reality of an organisation and its establishment.

The Leap of Faith

The participant's leap of faith seemed to be the critical moment in regard to the uncanny and mystical influence in leadership thinking. It was the moment of truth. By definition it is the leaving of one position, in this case the comfort of the organisational container, and the embracing of a new position, a way of thinking which incorporates the use of the ڛ. The faith being the trust, without supporting evidence, that the SO will work to support the leap. However, before looking at data suggesting the components and experience of *'the leap'*, it might be helpful to ask of the counterpart, was there a non-leap?

Again, it was fortunate to have the representative of the non-leap in Trevor. Trevor had worked since leaving school, some 30+ years of working life, for the same organisation. The role of leadership in business following in the footsteps of his father. This organisation put him forward for university training, they saw the potential of him. Although there is no evidence given in the data, it could be assumed he put himself up for new positions over the years involving a form of leap, but the sense from the gestalt of the interview was his hard-working talent was simply observed by the organisation and awarded accordingly. The organisation was the containing and influencing 'other'.

For Trevor there was never any doubt or hesitation expressed, his DNA business sense was never taken to any other type of organisation. He was clear his fundamental beliefs would not be open to hunches, making decisions based on something other than business logic. Effectively Trevor, or Group 1, would come close to being a non-leap, in regard to perceiving and utilising uncanny and mystical experience.

Group 2 also appeared not to have really taken any leaps of faith. The participants appeared to have followed a *'progression ladder'* approach, the goal being to *'get promoted or a step up'*, taking opportunities as they arose, sometimes as a result of uncanny luck and serendipity. The process for them being like that of snakes and ladders, with the occasional need to go sideways or even to take a role with less pay, a calculated madness. Also there was the need to avoid *'dead man's shoes'*, the equivalent of limbo within the game.

> *But I guess the steps I've made in my career have always been, em, you know,*
> *not, not very large progressions. So, there's steps that have taken me on a*
> *ladder of progression, rather than taking big leaps and, and sort of sud',*
> *suddenly getting into positions that I wouldn't, I would have struggled with*
> *maybe if I hadn't gone up through the various levels.*

...you couldn't stay too long in one place, 'cause you couldn't wear the dead
man's shoes if you wanted to progress in that organisation. So, you have to be
prepared to move around...

...it's interesting, you know, in the moves you make, that, you know, you
always look at that next job and think, well could I do it, could I not? And
then when you get to that place, you think, 'oh, yeah, I can do this', you
know, what was I worrying about!

Kevin

The future crown of higher leadership was always present, and the organisation was there to support the climb. This step-by-step movement was viewed as in sync with the organisation's process, and in the wider societal context, in step with the times. There appeared to be a symbiotic relationship between the participant and organisation.

...again something important in my career is that, you know, you know, if you
don't change with the times, then you could end up sort of no longer being
appropriate. And then these organisations wouldn't progress.

Kevin

There were however, some glimpses of leaps spurred by the uncanny and mystical in Group 2. Kevin, on one occasion, took a *'big step up'* moving closer to the heart of government as a result of meeting somebody who *'frightened him to death'*, because of the ruthless risk taking exhibited by this outsider. Steve, on the other hand, made a leap of sorts by leaving the civil service and entering the private sector. This move appeared to be supported into being by uncanny occurrences, but one which was also driven by the events of the time, the advent of an austerity government.

> *...decided to leave the civil service, em and decided I wanted to move into*
> *local government and then a series of things happened (2 sec.) that (3 sec.)*
> *were just sort of em, **lucky coincidences** I guess is the best way of putting it*
> *or spiritually ordained depending on which way you want to look at life.*
>
> Steve

These moves, although leaps for the individual, appeared to be minimal in risk, the underlying thinking in leadership remained intact. They were simply playing *'the cards'* dealt. The cards themselves metaphorically represented the established order.

However, the third group did take leaps of faith, but they weren't blind leaps. They were not leaps forced on them or without awareness of serious potential risk, they had agency in deciding to leap. The leaps effectively had three parts, the contemplation, the leap, and the landing.

The contemplation, the moment before the leap, particularly the first time, highlighted the importance of the SO, because there was always resistance either internally or externally. Amy, for example, realised the local authority and the education system did not support her *'big vision'*, she had outgrown their thinking. However, she felt supported by *'the universe'*, trusted it's *'listening ear'* that the outcome would be okay, despite the external resistance.

> *... sent down all the heavies to try and persuade me not to jump ship, not to*
> *come and work here, but I did and my immediate superior whom I am still*
> *friends always said to me, you are committing career suicide going to that*
> *school. You will never have influence from a school that size...*
>
> *Em, and there [laugh] again there were forces at play, ... I knew the minute I*
> *set foot through the door, that it was the right place for me to be...*
>
> Amy

Peter, having developed his belief in the power of the subconscious, the ability of thought to change the outcome through a *'super pos'* attitude, and the wish to build a *'bank of clients'*, needed to make a leap of faith to a newly started finance investment firm. However his SO and the new organisation were untested, there was no evidence that either endeavour would succeed. Also, in opposition, his wife wished their home organisation to more stable, pressing for him to take a salaried job. However he believed something *'other'* was supporting the leap, to '*give it one more try* ', despite the illogical nature of such a move.

> *So, so it's actually a huge leap of faith to say that's, that's where I want to be, that's what I want to do, that's where I want to go...*
>
> *...and I think this is where it links in with your 'canny and mystical part is that ...what was a leap of faith before, becomes more a sense of belief. Because, you know, good things are starting to happen.*
>
> <div align="right">Peter</div>

However, the contemplation can, as Brian evidenced, involve both systems, the existing established logic and the new unevidenced SO.

> *I don't know if these are uncanny or mystical, but, but, I think they're definitely uncanny. But there is something a bit mystical in that whole kind of intuition, leap of faith, whatever.*
>
> *... versus other times where, hmm, you know what, I think let's sleep on this one. Let's ponder it, let's think it through. Let's, let it gestate, you know, give it time, you know, don't be reactive...*
>
> <div align="right">Brian</div>

The case of Brian also appeared to provide evidence that an organisation could support such non-linear leaps of thinking. He was employed to be the '*disruptive grit in a disruptive oyster*, but the organisation kept this endeavour separate from the main body of the organisation. It was only when things were evidenced as useful and logical that they were absorbed back into the home organisation.

The leap itself was not without risk. As well as being perceived as mad by others, it was often not recognised as a leap, once accepted by the mainstream. What was once viewed as ludicrous, making no sense on paper, was retrospectively viewed as obvious both by the organisation and society. So the leap often yielded little validation for the participant, the emergent mystical transformation, the miracle, reduced, dismissed, or denied by the dominant paradigm.

> *they will just conveniently, you know, have selective memory about the fact*
> *that you were banging your head against the wall trying to persuade them to*
> *see something, and, and maybe they never saw it. ...*
>
> *then when it turns out that actually, you were right. ...they conveniently forget*
> *that, you know... you have to accept that ...*

<div align="right">Brian</div>

There is also the issue described by Brian as *'the sliding doors moment'*. This being a reference to a 1998 film 'Sliding Doors', where a leap onto a train was both taken and not taken, with both paths and destinies played out. Brian was clear that making a leap, based on an SO, also leaves in its wake what might have occurred if the leap were not taken. There was the residual mourning of a future not taken.

Having landed on the other side, embracing the use of the SO, most participants appear to have made some form of assessment as to the success or failure of the leap. A reflection on

not only was the individual leap worth it, but also if it led to a sustainable commitment, a permanent shift in thinking that the leap could be repeated, solidifying the SO

> *Em, but I think I suppose I've just learned to go with it.*
>
> *I kind of am, I think now I'm just accepting, of the, of not being able to make sense of it. You know, I think I'm at peace with the, with the, with the mysticality of it, so to speak, you know, it's, it's weird.*
>
> *...if you're willing to listen to that stuff...*
>
> Brian

The leap for these Group 3 participants clearly paid off at an individual leadership career level, but they were also the group which were able to take ش thinking, incorporated in their SO, back into the organisation.

Playing in the Quantum

'Play in the quantum' was a phrase used by Cathy, a phrase which encapsulates a crucial area of the findings. That being, to what degree are ش thoughts and thinking, brought back into the home organisation once an individual's SO has been formed in their mind? Also was there evidence to suggest a long-term change or use of uncanny and mystical within the home organisation as a result? Again, the three groups identified earlier are useful in understanding this issue.

With some organisations, it would appear there is no place for consideration of ش thinking. Figure 5. below shows Trevor (P4) firmly at the campfire of *'business sense'* or what would make sense in the established business culture and environment. The status quo of the home

organisation indicated with an X. However, in such a huge worldwide organisation, where Trevor is one CEO of many, it might not be inconceivable that there would be others in the organisation at this level, who are more open to such thinking.

Figure 5. Participant symbiotic with Organisation
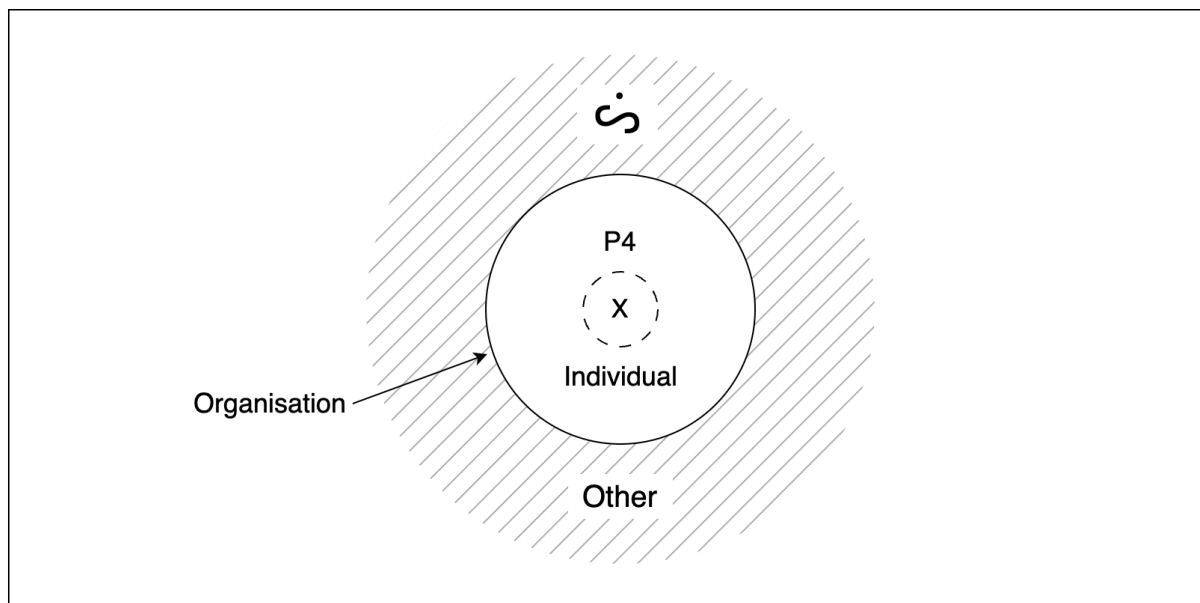
Participants in Group 2 however, appeared to be open to the uncanny and mystical but on a temporary basis as part of making sense of grief whilst in transition. The home organisation remains unaffected by what some participants experience as a 'strange time' of coincidence and luck. Normal equilibrium is then restored once this period of loss and grieving is over. This transitional use of the ﺵ by a displaced member of the organisation is shown in Figure 6a / 6b. below.

It is interesting to note that Linda (P8) could be part of this configuration in this respect and indeed appeared haunted by a grieving process which for her seemed to be far from complete. However her SO of repair and restoration through counselling, incorporating ﺵ thinking, is

clearly something she brings into her organisation leadership. Her organisation in mind allows the ﺱ to sit alongside the establishment. For this reason she is considered as part of Group 3 indicated in Figure 7. The effects of ﺱ thinking within the participants of Groups 1 and 2 were found to range from near zero, to temporary and limited. There were no indications given of significant change in the home organisation X which remained very much unaffected.

Figure 6a. Participant in mourning   Figure 6b. Participant post mourning
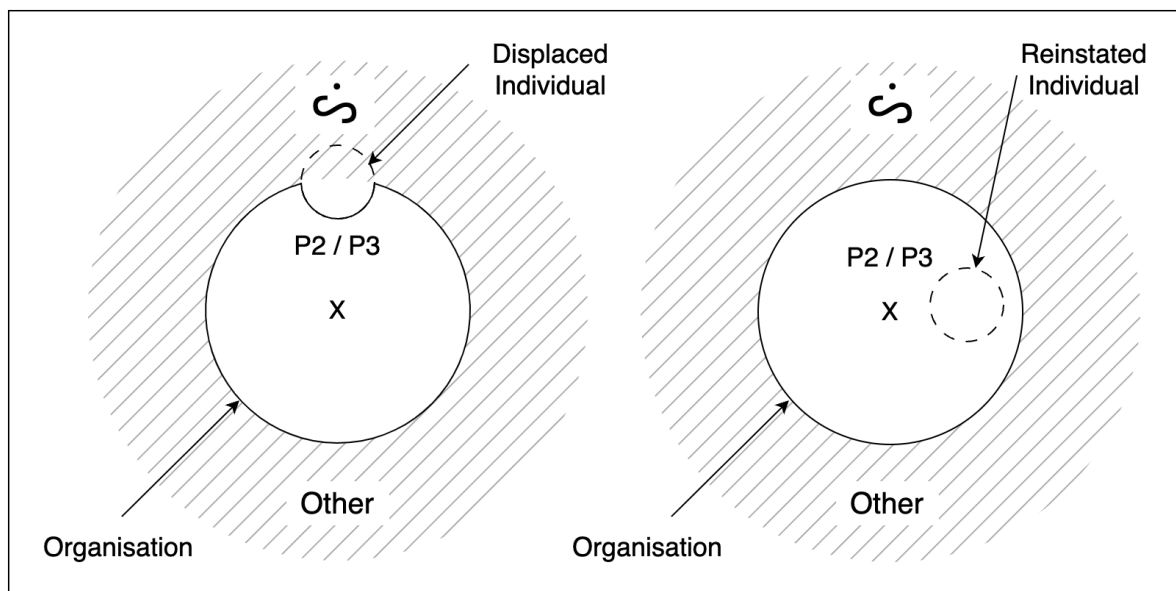
Within Group 3, the picture is more varied. In Figure 7. below the element of ﺱ thinking is taken into the leaders' thinking within the organisation. Linda while strongly believing in her SO, which incorporated ﺱ thinking, appeared to be open with others in the organisation, unlike Peter (P7) who remained closed to the organisation.

With Linda, her *SO* thinking could potentially have influence within her home organisation, even if only at a group level. Linda was clear she could discuss her thinking with colleagues, but it was not something she would share with senior management.

Figure 7. Participants incorporating *SO*
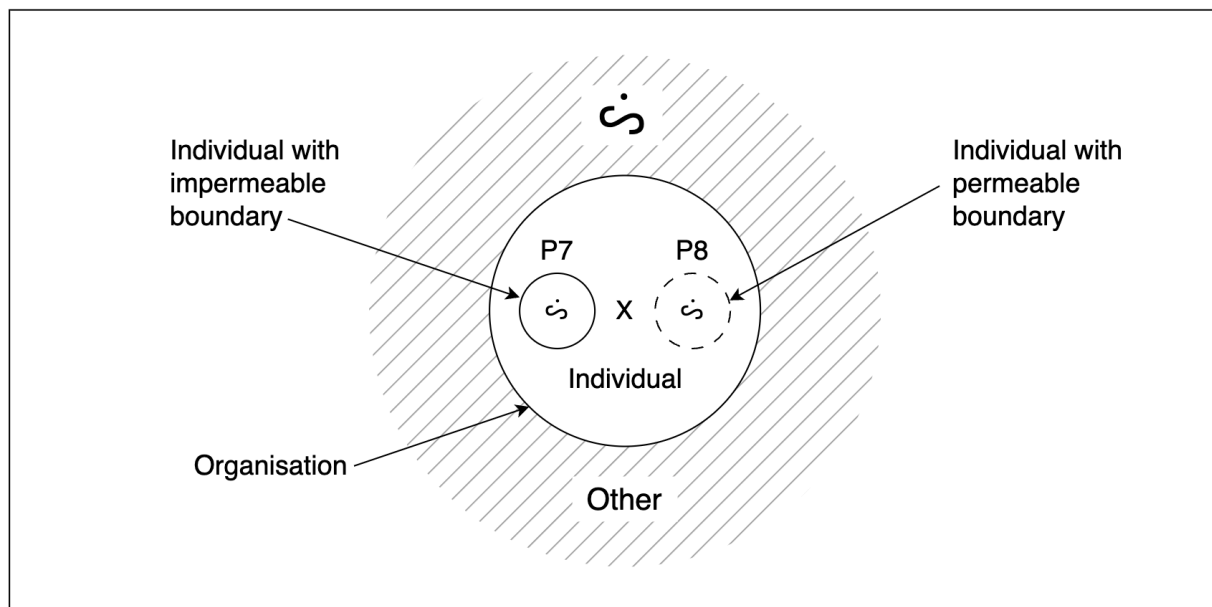
Peter on the other hand, has a very individual SO. There is no desire expressed to spread or use his *SO* experience beyond himself to the organisation or others and his SO did not appear to be supported by the home organisation. He acknowledged that in some ways he was of a bygone era, not of the current time within the wealth management sector. So while the boundary around *SO* for Linda is shown as permeable, Peter is not.

Now we come to the deep end of the metaphorical pool of *SO*. In this subset of Group 3 participants had an SO that was evidenced as being very driven and close to the edge of what

might be acceptable in the home organisation. Amy and Brian, share much in common, their *'vision'* was big, their intent was to change the idea of the establishment itself, to reimagine the campfire. Amy for example, saw the idea of 'school' reaching beyond the boundary of the gates, crossing the boundaries of education and business. Brian saw the boundaries of humans in work, being challenged by the future of robotics.

For this subset there was a real sense of wishing to initiate paradigm change through their non-linear ∽ thinking. Yet there were also concerns from the home organisation. Amy saw potential for her ideas, but had to effectively create a nursery environment in which to grow them. An environment which insulated her from the home organisation. Her thinking was evidenced as very effectively infused within her school, with other staff recognising the uncanny help she had with the vision.

However the home organisation appeared not to be ready to accept any uncanny or mystical elements or at least not openly. As Amy put it succinctly, she had to play the game within their procedures and processes, but they too, the educational system, had to be seen playing the game within the wider environmental context. The Gestalt experience from the interview hinted at an unspoken truce, with revolution never far away.

Amy (P1) & Brian (P5) could equally be represented by the same Figure 8a. below. For them their ∽ thinking was recognised as part of the home organisation, but effectively they were kept at arm's length in a nursery organisation. The separation being a safe condition in which to experiment. So they were tolerated as a necessity, a part of the future for the organisation, as long as they were perceived as being not too disruptive.

However, Figure 8b represents where the participant internally perceived themselves to be, exercising a more experimental س thinking than the home organisation or even the creative nursery were aware of, at the very edge of things.

Fig 8a. An Nursery Organisation   Fig 8b. Beyond Nursery Thinking
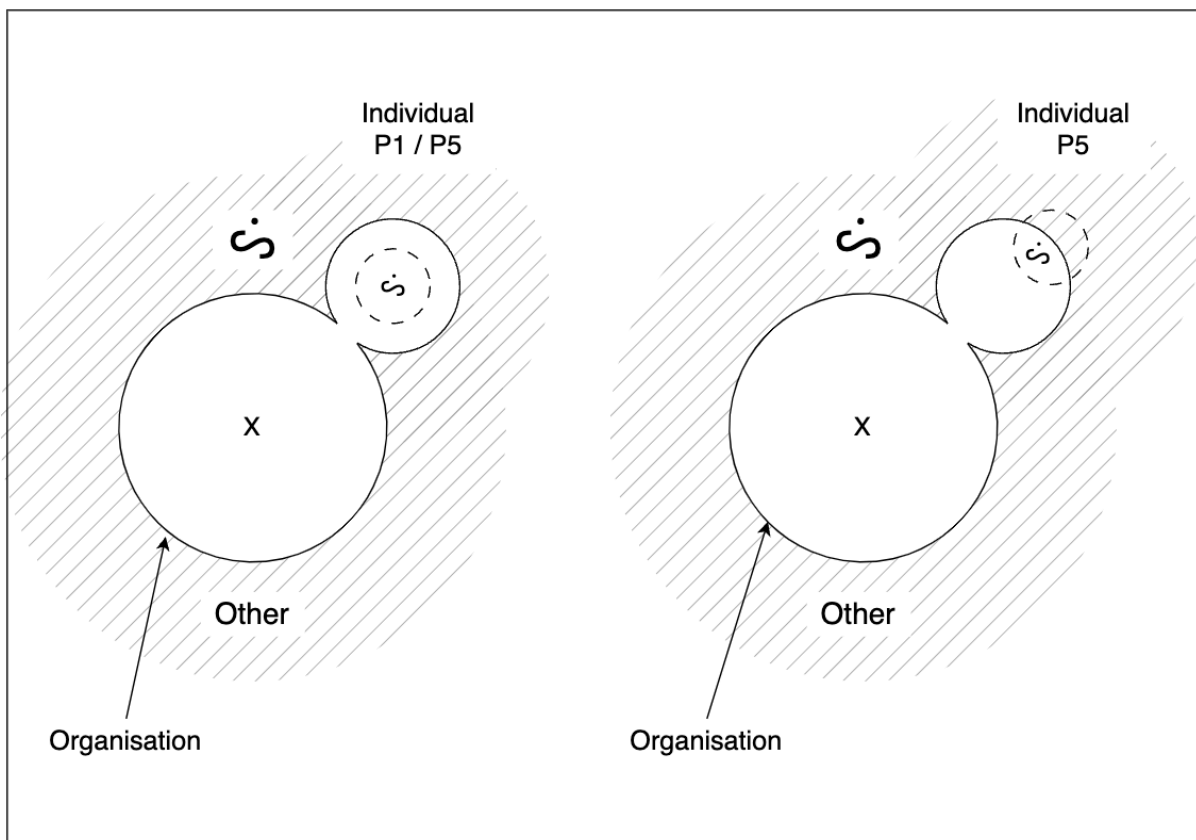
This then brings us to the ultimate situation, where the participant was so invested in their SO that they separated entirely from the containment of the home organisation. Cathy (P9), having spent years of the top level of investment finance, left her a home organisation. This may well have coincided with the failure within that sector, the crash of the late 90's, but the rupture was

the impetus to create her own retreat centre, and then to form a new organisation. An organisation with �علم thinking very much at its core and aligned with her SO.

The advantage of the separation appeared to be that the autonomy enabled her thinking to be taken to leaders of a much wider and varied field. It also appeared to have had the benefit that she was more attentive to the force of �علم, the surrounding force available to all organisations, if they were able to *'tune into it'*. In a way, this presents the most advanced implementation of �علم thinking into influencing future leadership.

However, this brings us to an important factor common across all groups, the language deemed by society acceptable to introduce this thinking of �علم, into the home organisation. In Group 2, the language was always tentative and dismissible, phrases such as, strange time, luck, coincidence, and good timing. These phrases might even be acceptable within the home organisation. Within group 3, the subset of Peter and Linda, did not appear to use any language of an �علم nature and the language of the home organisation remained unchanged.

It was very different in regard to the remainder of group 3, particularly Brian and Cathy. Brian was clearly evidenced in the data as struggling to utter any words that would suggest the mystical, although he appeared to believe it, he would prefer not to say it. It came across in the Gestalt of the interview that the reputation of his work would be impacted. Words such as, *'intuition'* and *'system 2 thinking'*, were more palatable with the home organisation in mind. Indeed, Brian relied on the use of allegory and metaphor in conversations with others as a means of encapsulating of the �علم thinking without disturbing the others.

Cathy made her feelings very clear, that as an independent business, wishing to sell her vision into other organisations, she was particularly careful regarding the language used. She would

not use any word that bordered on the suggestion of mystical, not even to use the word intuition. For her, what she calls the *'Inner Game'* is a framework and means of giving people a chance to sense into something, which could help in decision-making. An opportunity to see the world in from different perspective. She used the *'quantum'* as an acceptable term, based on physics, symbolically representing what cannot be seen but what may have a great influence.

It appeared that only by finding the effective means of interfacing with the home organisation could the idea of thinking with uncanny and mystical origin be approached. The edge of the heimlich, where س was possible, needed to be somehow presented as unheimlich.

Chapter 10

Discussion introduction

What I can see, what I, you know, what I, so that, that's really, that's what

the, the 'and' is, because the 'other' [*] is em, is the, is actually that, that's the

bit that's not real, the binary, the, right, wrong, up, down, left, right, black,

white.

It's just em, it's way too basic. And it's wrong or it's not right or it's not, **'it'**.

Cathy

The quote above is somewhat confusing and on first reading makes little sense. However, it aptly conveys the experience of struggling to describe how inadequate our measuring tools are in the face of the *'whole reality'* we find ourselves in. Indeed, it might well have come from the pages of Lewis Carroll's (2009) 'Through the looking glass'.

In some ways, this discussion chapter mirrors that confusion. Death comes before birth, superordinate objects are formed from what makes no sense and at the end of it all, the hope is that unknowing will lead to knowing. If then it is possible to conceive of such impossible things as the uncanny and mystical influencing the leadership of a new paradigm, one where unheimlich is welcomed as heimlich, and the edge of madness is the saviour of sanity, then stepping through the looking glass may be somewhat unavoidable.

Through the data of the findings outlined, using the lens of systems psychodynamic thinking and the literature review, the aim will be to answer as far as possible, the initial research questions shown below. In addition, any other emergent questions will also be considered.

- What kind of psychosocial experiences give rise to Uncanny and Mystical experiences in organisational leadership roles?

- What impact have these unspoken Uncanny and Mystical experiences had on their leadership development and thinking?

- What might the subjugation or repression of such uncanny and mystical experiences have meant for the participant?

- What contextual factors have influenced, inhibited, or supported their recollection of such experiences?

The next 3 chapters, Death, Birth, and the Superordinate Object, will consider the interviews collectively, seeking to illuminate how and why the uncanny and mystical might be meaningful to leadership thinking, as well as the containing organisations. The following chapter then will seek to understand how this meaning might be digested and made use of within organisations and consulting more generally.

Chapter 11

Death

A Death blow is a Life blow to Some

Who till they died, did not alive become —

Who had they lived, had died but when

They died, Vitality begun.

Emily Dickenson (1864)

The 'death blow' to which Dickenson refers, does not necessarily mean an actual physical death, but it highlights the paradox that we all as individuals, organisations, and even societies might drift along as if dead, not questioning anything, if not brought alive by some blow. A blow which brings to the mind a degree of chaos, a revelation which disturbs the psyche and needs to be contained and addressed in order to restore equilibrium. Indeed, a global death blow in the form of world war and epidemic were very much in the air of 1919 as Freud wrote 'The Uncanny', as explored by Zilcosky (2018)

Generally, the participants narratives by varying degrees all evidenced having endured such blows, and it was these blows, which brought to their attention, the uncanny and the mystical.

Life before the fall

As the data reflects, the eight participants, whilst a small sample size, are an exceptional group of individuals. They all had high ambitions, and for the most part have been driven to achieve their dreams, lauded for their introducing visionary change, or reaching the highest rungs on the hierarchical ladder. Indeed, it was also clear that many have endured great hardships to attain the desired crown, be that an OBE, financial fortune, or a lasting legacy of ideas.

However, it would prove useful, before understanding the uncanny and mystical in their thinking, to understand the psychosocial roots of their high attainment. What was it that fostered the sense of being in themselves extraordinary, that they might have such great expectations? For it was the systems containment, the matching of desire and system that would appear to have led to such growth. Trevor, for instance in replicating and identifying with his father's 'business sense', found an organisation which believed in his capabilities, nurtured him through university, and through the organisation's expansionary aims, offered growing leadership roles that placed no resistance to his ideals.

To use the metaphor of mother and child, the want of the child was met with a containing nurturing organisational mind. The expectations were mutual and commensal with growth. The ever expanding container left space for the great exceptions of the contained. To use the metaphor of one of the participants, there was little 'impedance mismatch'. For some, one might say that there was almost a reverie between the organisation and the leader, with little need of a notion of uncanny or mystical in their thinking. Yet while the image presented was one of a happy union of individual and the system, there was also a sense of rigidity not typically open to radical thinking, a concretising establishment.

For others, great expectations were clearly nurtured from an early age. The tenant of Amy's parents, 'where you lead others will follow', repeated daily, must surely have fostered an internalised concept of self as exceptional. Much as in the way that Freud's segregation from his siblings, with his own room, and being guarded against being disturbed, would almost certainly have given him an unspoken status of being above the others, to be followed.

This being marked as different from the group, expected to not follow the trend, but to set it, is clearly identified in the data and appears to act as a driving force. Indeed for some it seemed to established at a very early age. Brian, for example, rejects his parents' religious beliefs at the age of five and makes clear to his family, that he was not interested in fantasy. He was a dyed in the wool atheist and scientist. An individual who, as he put it, like the Marx brothers edict, would never want to join a club that would be willing to accept him.

He was the starter of organisations. So in a way he represented a very anti-establishment position which served to protect his unconscious internalised object as exceptional, he had no wish to be an employee of the system, be that home, work, or church. Yet, as it was later evidenced, it often requires an established organisational paradigm in which to affect the revolution of the exceptional.

This use of a system mismatch is clearly evidenced with Amy, who found herself being repeatedly placed in the position of second chair, but saw the mismatch as something on which to take a stand. She was driven to prove the system mistaken, and to raise the status of her exceptionality to a higher level. The degree of triumph being that much more having overcome the system's expectation, the driven response all the greater fuelled by a sense of injustice.

How much deeper then must this have been for participants, such as Peter and Linda, where the sense was of literally fighting for one's life, where they were viewed as the opposite of

exceptional and very much let down by the containing systems, home, educational and social. They in turn had to be exceptional in order to simply survive.

This theme of exceptionality, and the psychosocial experiences of earlier life, effectively before they became adults, appeared to link the participants' experience and use of the ش in dealing with ruptures to their sense of ideal self as 'leader', and the corresponding expectation to do well. When there were great expectations, internally, and externally, conscious, and unconscious, then there was likely also to be a greater sense of existential risk, when such an identity is fundamental to the inner idea of self. The greater the rise, the greater the fear of falling. However, how a participant dealt with such edge conditions, was from the data where the ش came into play.

The death blow

Death appears to play a significant part in how, the ش came into focus for the participant group, as if it had always been there but was suddenly brought to their attention. For some, it was very much a moment, the experience of being emotionally, psychically and in some cases physically, derailed from the secure foundation of the past and being temporarily without present or the future as they had imagined. This was very much the moment when heimlich became unheimlich, when they are truly in the space of the unknown. For some it appeared as a single moment, when the organisation turned against them. While for others, it was a series of events suddenly recognised as a curious pattern that could not be ignored.

So, for Steve, failure of one government, and the hostility of the incoming one, a singular moment in time, brought about a tidal change in which social uncertainty was exposed. What

was previously valued became valueless, exceptional reduced to ordinary, the resulting existential anxiety exploited by the system. Such governmental ebbs, and flows, boom and bust, are not uncommon historically, so why should anyone be so deeply affected?

In a way, the individual and society more generally might be thought to be in denial. All the greater the shock then when the truth is revealed. For Steve this was a loss of over investment of self in work. The unspoken deal being, *'If I flog myself to death'*, I will be held up as exceptional. The *'turn'* came with the rupture of that unspoken and to some extent unconscious commitment to the establishment. The result being a death blow to the self and the paradigm, the foundational idea in the mind of what it was to be an exceptional leader.

It appeared to be in this context that the doppelgänger was recognised, the harbinger of death, the leader whose ruthlessness knows no bounds, and was seen to have special powers. This 'other', the bogeyman, was in some ways envied, feared, and admired as the new exceptional. A true death blow to the exceptional leader, who had perhaps no way of seeing themselves as anything else. Part of their ideal self was projected, to be externally displaced and recognised as the alien other.

The strange thing was that the death blow did not necessarily appear to be only linked to bad news. The death of a grandfather, who was well insured, was the liberation from the tyranny of poverty and the triumph over a failing educational system. Yet it also brought about a doppelgänger guide, one dedicated to the death of bureaucracy and the liberation of the self-reliant entrepreneur. It unleashed an explosive drive to create an alternate system, to have a self-produced 'client bank' that would remove any future existential threat. Even so, this turn of events was a loss of identity as a starving fighter. A fighter at the edge of existence.

The death blow as an existential threat was a reality for all, since it was their very core identity, the ideal self, that was threatened. To not be exceptional in some ways was not to exist, to have failed the system being experienced as a deep narcissistic wound.

For others, there were multiple blows, but rather than experienced as existential, they are taken as evidence that the organisation was wrong, leading to excess energy directed towards *'showing them'*. An indication of being less attached to the organisational role specifically and more about seeing their belief pitted against the organisation, as opposed to getting the organisation to provide a means to re-join the club.

So, while the type of blow varied, what appeared consistent was that it produced a loss, which resulted in the mourning response. The death blow could be recognised because it caused thinking and experience consistent with mourning.

Mourning the death of ideal

If we take the stages of mourning outlined in the seminal works of Kübler-Ross (1969), the first stage is one of shock, disbelief, and denial. The sense of shock all the deeper since the individuals were viewed as exceptional and destined for great things. This disbelief affected not only the individual, but those invested in the potential of the leader. The perceived or actual loss of identity for some was responded to manically, defensively investing more energy to correct what could not be allowed to exist as the truth, the possibility they might not be extraordinary after all. Chaos was introduced into what was a predictable known system. There was also the sense that they have become uncanny to themselves, not quite right, off track from where they normally saw themselves. Who was this person who is not exceptional?

Internally, their unconscious good objects appeared to be at risk, resulting in a need to somehow restore the equilibrium, to make sense of what was experienced as senseless. However, if being a leader was so central to their identity, and it was the organisational container of the self which appears to have failed, then the individual is effectively left without a container for greatness. They were in effect without a skin to protect them from being ordinary, from being a follower.

This then appeared to create a double threat. They could not afford to lose the idea of themselves as ideal, resulting in damage to their internal good object, their sense of self, an ideal crafted by the great expectations of themselves and others. Equally the belief that they were central to the organisation, mirrored by their ideal object was called in to question as the organisation was felt no longer to contain and support them. There was a potential of catastrophe at the very roots of who they saw themselves and how they were internally organised. Unconsciously the ego was experienced as vulnerable, with the superego offering little guidance since all the rules of logic, the known and knowing, had for the moment taken flight, with the potential for melancholia as described by Freud (1917).

In a way, this could be interpreted as a rupture which brings the individual in contact with the contact barrier, the very edge of raw experience, where things cannot be thought about. So as well as a manic response, a doubling down on the idea of being extraordinary, there is also searching out for a lifesaver, a life saviour so to speak, that might make sense of this intolerable experience. This then appears to be when the leaders were more receptive to ﺷ thinking. There was a need of a larger psychic container, an unseen other that could be used.

It is interesting that time plays a large part in this sense making, as one of the effects of grief is to feel a timelessness, that time is frozen and meaningless. While others' lives continue and organisations still function, time had become meaningless to the leader who has become uncanny to themselves. Whilst manic behaviour might initially suffice as a defence, it comes

into question when the reality of the derailment becomes a revelation. The realisation that the relationship of the organisation was less commensurate than thought to be, it had turned into one more parasitic in nature. The leader turned to being the lead, to be absorbed by the organisation. Rather than the leader getting the best of people, supported by the organisation, its failure to contain the leader resulted in a sense of being cannibalised, it was no longer to be trusted to contain their greatness.

It was useful to note where the individual's sense of authority was located when the failure of organisational containment results in the withdrawal of the idea of extraordinary leadership. In a way the mourning of the lost identity can result in a fatalistic mind set until a fortunate series of events intervenes to restore order. The power and authority are located in the 'other', those who make a call, have them in mind or imagine them in a new role. A bit of good fortune is emergent, the original source unknown, but the timing being fortuitous. The fall from greatness is located within themselves and the good luck to restore it is located outside, beyond their influence. However, they do, with hindsight, locate the series of events considered ﻦﺳ to have been the transition needed when they were feeling lost.

What then followed was anger and depression, a sense of how could this be the system, the unconscious good objects having turned bad. This then was where things like synchronicity, coincidence and luck uncannily appeared. Synchronicity suggesting some force external which could bring order to time, could bring at the right moment a 'bit of luck', some opportunity, even if set in the future, which suggests all is not lost. Synchronicity brings to light other organisations, other objects which might be invested in, something to be bargained for. The individual's thinking was pealed back to a primal stage, where a good breast needs to magically appear, such as a bit of luck from somewhere, a meditation leading to an unknown organisation.

Random chance, which is chaotic, is magically coordinated by coincidence, by an unseen force into a greater order.

In a way the uncanny self is projected outwards, with the appearance of the doppelgänger and the uncanny coincidences. The mystical becomes a container more powerful than man-made institutions, which were felt to have ruptured and failed to support their greatness.

For many the use of ں is a temporary transitional object to ferry them across the liminal space, to the deepest existential unknown. The individuals are able to accept the loss, to reject if necessary the institution and join a new organisation, one which will recognise the greatness, with new followers.

The ں therefore is to be dismissed, downplayed, questioned as to its mysticalness being just astute mundane good leadership. The transitional object found in ں experience is dispensed with, no longer needed in the face of the greatness restored and a new organisational container being available. The experience is then consigned to memory. The internal good object is restored with the new organisation in the mind, a new establishment.

However, for some there appears to remain vestiges of fear for the boogie man's return. They are left with ghosts, repressed anxieties, the wish never to return to such a state of unknowing. Whilst the alliance between organisation and self is restored, the relationship once again commensurate with growth, there is a withdrawal of overinvestment of the self as leader. The rules of the game are re-established and the role of leadership for some becomes a role that is played rather than truly inhabited. The introvert becomes the extrovert to provide a suitable face. Also the establishment is diminished internally, with the view that it is *'all dust'* at the end of the day. While playing the role is rewarded, the great expectations of the self are consumed

by the organisation, their formulation of greatness is not quite enough to bring permanent organisational change, they are the ones that are changed.

These participants are no longer uncanny to themselves because there is an acceptance that they don't have the magic touch, they become 'good enough' leaders, who are no threat to the establishment. Indeed, for some they become more the embodiment of the establishment. The ∽ have served the purpose of temporarily externalising parts of themselves, through the uncanny experience, the mystical bringing order to chaos as a means of protecting those inner good objects but leaving behind the occasional haunting of the experience. The memory of a madness at the edge.

However, this appeared not to be the experience of all. Whilst nearly all brought to the fore, through their story told, the blows that called into question the foundations of their thinking, not all used the ∽ simply as a transitional object in the process of morning, some saw it as the birth of something new.

<u>Chapter 12</u>

<u>Birth</u>

<u>Curiosity at the edge of grief</u>

Society generally would appear to need people to move on from grief, perhaps driven by the denial of mortality. There is an organisational need for people to return to work, to reach closure. However, even though Kübler Ross (1969) outlines five stages of grief, ending in acceptance, or as it is commonly referred to 'closure', she was clear that grief is nonlinear. Experiences of grief do not happen in one particular order and grief can return at any time. For some of the participants, the losses experienced were still palpable in their narratives. Kevin, despite being awarded an OBE, clearly voiced a sense of shame at his failing his 11+ exam, while Steve continued to struggle for years with grief following a government change and Linda still mourns for her 'lost years'.

For Steve and Linda in particular, there is a sense of being haunted by the past, whilst 'putting on a face' to the organisation that says they are 'over it'. Perhaps this is part of the reason, the ﺵ elements used during the grief are devalued and disregarded since they are linked to a sense of shame at the loss. Indeed the attachment to the new organisation would appear to contain an element of pining for that time before the blow, the sense of leadership no longer completely idolised. However, what was evident is that ﺵ thinking helped them returned to a sense of equilibrium until once more organisational containment was available, whilst not necessarily wholly investing the self in leadership.

However the narratives presented by other participants show a curiosity, a recognition of experience which, while painful in the aspect of loss and mourning, also contained some elements of creativity. That death was not without its use. The failure of the establishment to recognise their exceptionalness, or the feeling of being smothered and hemmed in by organisational rigidity, caused a pushing back and a need to create opportunity, to reach beyond the establishment.

In effect they were pushed to transform a second chair position, to overthrow the organisational resistance. It was in seeking to restore the ideal in the mind, amidst painful revelation, that appeared to suggest to them there may be other ways of thinking. Liminal space indicating that there may be other psychological resources available when the organisation has failed or abandoned them. There was an insistent search for 'other'. Instead of, or perhaps as well as, repairing the psychological rupture, the tear in the fabric of the ideal self, there formed the idea that the س which supported sense making in the unknown of grief, might be an ever present 'other' to be tuned into.

In grief the س that emerged was therefore not dismissed. The individual still lived and was contained by the organisation, which was itself not dismissed. As Brian states, we don't dismiss the laws of physics because of the mystical notion or wish to fly. However the sense of unknowing that grief offered, the chaotic edge of void created by grief, brought with it an attention to a form of irrationality that somehow proved fruitful.

The س aspects of the experience, the sense that there was something else beyond the known, suggested a wider perspective. Cathy amidst her darkest hours of loss, noticed the comfort in seeing something out of place in nature, an apple, where there should not have been one. The sense of seeing something at the peripheral vision caused by the dislocation of grief. A noticing

of subtle bodily changes, signs, smells, something a little off with the picture. A strange mixture of loss, longing, and imaginative interaction with the inanimate and time. These responses suggested a psychological interaction with another dimensional aspect, something beyond rationality.

This almost magical thinking was what Freud (1919) suggested was something once known, but long forgotten, the belief in deep rooted primal notions that preceded civilisation. Such beliefs as time not being linear, that there are signals, fluctuations, affected by how we direct imagine, or attract a different future, *'it is only thinking makes it so'*. For these leaders there was not so much a fatalistic view of loss, something to be gone through, but a moment of opening to other potential dimensions, even if only within their minds, as a result of external organisational ruptures in providing psychological containment.

Chaos theory, as explored by Lorenz (1963), supports this idea of the microscopic alterations in highly complex systems can have irrational unexpected results. For these participants metaphorically it was akin to Plato's cave allegory, by being forced into the darkness of grief, sensing strange shapes on the wall, appears to reignite an imaginative connection to the unknown, not accessible through rationality.

However at this point of bifurcation, the point of a new emergent paradigm or a return to the status quo, it begs the question as to why this group were better able to utilise the ش, to take it beyond grief? Why are they less avoidant of the unknown and able to look to the ghosts within? The answer seemed to be contained in the earlier biographical narrative. Some were clearly defended against the shame and loss, a particularly strong taboo of leadership within the rational thinking world, possibly as a result of the systems in which they were embedded.

For example, failing the 11+ exam might well have brought shame to the family and organisational group, as well as propelling the individual to the Herculean task of getting the whole system to adjust and provide extraordinary resources for them to get back on track. The civil servant who was 'turned' by a new government, might also have felt the shame of the outgoing container, the government who left financial emptiness, as well as the shame of societies having perhaps lived beyond the limits of credit.

Yet this aspect of shame is processed differently by others. Some appear to be supporting in a way that sees a failure to gain a role of leadership as simply an opportunity to demonstrate creative leadership. The idea that 'you lead, and others will follow', despite what others might think. That is not to say that they ensured no hardship or loss, but these individuals were able to bear these ruptures because of a strong ideal object and appeared to be less affected because of grief.

The other aspect however, was that there were some individuals who appear to be adept at killing off the establishment. Brian for example, divorces himself from his family beliefs at the age of five, and shocks his University professor by 'going into industry', rather than pursuing the socially expected path of academic research. Amy took on the unexpected unwanted project and took it to national acclaim. She was not shamed by the group, but effectively triumphed over the mundane. Alternatively, it could be that they were more effective in repressing the shameful experience due to the strongly supported idealisation of self. Either way, this group's curiosity appeared to extend and expand in relation to the ڛ brought into mind through the chaos of grief.

<u>Birth in a moonless in the sky</u>

In primaeval times, before our current level of civilisation or establishment, the period when there was no visible moon was considered a return to the very source of being. From that darkness anything might appear, and more stars were visible, as if seeing back further into the beginning. The timeless moonless sky. What emerged from the narratives of those who utilised �ش beyond grief was that they maintained a curiosity whilst in the unknown and unknowable, they were drawn to the idea that the irrational had something of value in it. The sense that a greater wisdom would present itself, if the pain of not knowing and the darkness could be tolerated.

So, while some used �ش as a transitional support, moving on and consigning the experience to faint memory, these individuals saw the opportunity to look to the faintest stars in that moonless sky. They identified patterns and coincidence as more every day than previously thought. They went out of their way to sense **'it'**, the **'other'**. It is no surprise that some saw the origins of the �ش experience as being metaphorically planetary in nature, *'universal'*, things happened when *'stars aligned'*, when there was some *'cosmic ordering'*. Things appeared out of the blue as if always destined, but only coming into recognition because of a better attunement to the uncanny. Such as the déjà vu of sensing before time an opportunity becoming visible, a portal to something 'other' opening up. This was very much akin to Bion's idea of the need for a beam of intense darkness needed to illuminate the faintest lights, which are obliterated by other brighter more dominant constellations.

Yet from an organisational perspective this might be viewed as irrational thinking, things overcome by knowledge and rationality should not be undone. In the phrase 'curiosity killed the cat', the rejoinder was that 'satisfaction brought it back', the **'it'** one could assume was the

cat, but the question might be how was the cat changed, was it the same cat at all? One thing is clear, there is a warning embedded in the phrase. The narratives also back up this sense that while ف could be useful, it is most creative at the edge of what could be considered madness.

Another possibility as to why this particular group might have better tolerated the unknown and remained curious to the use of ف, was that their earlier position and role in groups was on the edge of things, not outside, but not quite inside. This may have given them early experience with the uncanny, as they themselves symbolised the uncanny for the group.

In effect they represented the paradox of being neither one thing nor the other. For example, Brian was painfully aware of 'not fitting in' to a dominant male paradigm, he was a non-conformist to the MBA culture. Amy also repeatedly stresses that she was not a stereotypical head. She took pains to represent the role in a non-authoritarian manner in relation to parents and children; the arrangement of her office being deliberately without symbolism of dominant leadership.

The narratives would suggest these early formative psychosocial experiences led to not only being more tolerant of the loneliness that was experienced in the unknown, but also the ability to be more empathetic and accepting of the 'other' position. These aptitudes of being able to bear loneliness were not just physicality or placing in a group. To be so far from the campsite, as Brian put it, even further than the organisation or a group was aware, had the potential for psychological jeopardy, the edge of what Bion (1965) referred to as 'catastrophic change', death to the existing state of mind .

These more tolerant individuals were therefore supported internally to be more curious as to being beyond knowing. They were effectively without recourse to the safety net of the

organisation in the mind since where they were tuning into, pointed their beam of darkness so to speak, was at something not considered any part of the formulation of the establishment.

Whereas others, such as Groups 1 and 2, spoke of their careers as being unplanned, as a means of demonstrating their agility in taking opportunities within the system, they were still following the established map that lead to the crown. Theirs was not the narrative of what might be thought the 'curiouser and curiouser', those in Group 3. A group who chose to go to the very edge of territory which had not yet emerged, let alone been mapped.

Cartographers of old used to draw a red line at the point where their knowledge ended, writing 'hic sunt dracones', warning of the dragons in the unknown. This non-territory, all the more dangerous in this case because it was not part of the rational model. The established model where the leaders of an organisation know the future or have plans that rule out uncertainty. A leader who might suggest they have no idea what will emerge is likely to be castigated as well as cause a great deal of anxiety to the work group.

This idea of a 'rational formula' is the dominant thinking in most organisations and by extension a force within the organisation in the mind of the participants . A leads to B and with a good 'business sense' C might be predicted, or at the very least something that looks like C will be rationalised and managed by the organisational establishment. These non-campfire leaders, such as Group 3, were trying to give birth or use the س to be midwives to ideas which on paper make no sense.

How is it then, to take that س experience and give birth to the idea that it could be used, to stay in the unknown, to await the dim light from somewhere beyond imagining. The very idea is the antithesis of 'instrumental rationality' aimed at a limited end, a rationally ordered decision-making process. Even the emergent process from the narrative data shown in the flow diagram

(see Appendix C) had a valency towards some ordering, beginning, middle and end. It was not, as the stages of grief, intended as a handrail of linear dimension, only a formation to open enquiry.

What seemed consistent within the narrative of these individuals is that they appeared to be comfortable at the edge, even with the risks involved. To be with the not knowing at the edge of knowledge, even if thought to have the potential for madness. This appeared evidenced in the initial focus groups, who in a blind future analysis of segments of data, saw a dark future for some of the participants. Their prediction suggested that to be on the edge, would lead to a nervous breakdown, alcoholism, and even potential suicide. There seemed to be a consensus that pushing the envelope was not conducive to stable relationships or good mental health. Indeed, the narrative findings did show the anxiety that this potential for madness imposes.

However, whilst some participants spoke of being burnt out from the chaos of 'start-up' experiences of an organisation, the birth of an organisation, it was for them the resistance of the establishment which appeared to be particularly taxing. Yet being at the edge, not knowing how things would work out, what would emerge, being comfortable with irrationality, appears also to be an energising experience. What appeared to propel them forward was the sense that while something was unknown, before it emerged to consciousness as the birth of the idea, it was known in the mystical element of creation, heralded by the uncanny. The uncanny being the strange precursor to attunement with the mystical, the unheimlich leading to an alternate heimlich.

Brian for example deliberately places individuals and groups together in a way which makes no sense, simply to see what emerges. One thing is clear about this edge is that it is very messy. Messy not only in the results, since there is no guarantee in the ∽ unknown, but psychologically messy and risky. Amy appears to be restricted by the organisations she worked

in, but there was also a sense of the organisations simply trying to reduce exposure to too much unknown, to dampen big ideas. Steve also explained this need of the establishment to keep the edge at bay, evidenced in his defence of the church towards the advent of 'weird' thinking. However, this also suggested that the organisation could not provide a suitably strong container to allow such experimentation at the edge, for fear of what might emerge and how the new idea might affect the group. As a result the نب was to be guarded against.

This institutional defence and increasing closing down of novelty was succinctly explored in Peter's reasoning for leaving his organisation. He spoke of 'the Smiths' coming in ever greater numbers, a film reference to 'The Matrix' (1999), to the cloning of management, representing the growing establishment. While he could fight one or two agents of bureaucracy, he ultimately knew they would win. This raises a very important issue, could being at the edge, looking into the abyss of the unknown, possibly at the cost to the self, result in significant paradigm change. Brian's work at the cutting edge in the field of robotics had revolutionised the organisation which called him 'out of the blue'.

However, as Brian outlines the organisation and the wider public, have a form of amnesia. The moment something becomes known, the idea adopted by the establishment, it was forgotten that it was the result of a group who continued beyond the boundary of organisational sense, who embraced نب. To stay with the birth metaphor, once the idea is born, taken up by the world, little regard appears to be given to the container, to the risks in the unknown which the participants took in concerning the idea, the نب experience.

Vision and the need for a bigger boat

There is a scene in the 1975, Spielberg production 'Jaws', where a foolhardy crew are searching in the wide expanse of deep ocean to find a terrorising creature, when one of the trio gets a glimpse of something terrifying and beyond previous comprehension. In a state of trepidation, he says to the captain, *'we're going to need a bigger boat'*. As a metaphor it appears to capture the crux of the issue at hand. For the group who wish to return to the ghosts within, to reach into the unknown with a big vision, then they may simply be in need of a bigger container than the organisation can provide. Amy's arms and legs rupturing the container of the educational system in a manner of Alice in Wonderland vividly betrays this need. The sense that the institution does not get 'it', they cannot glimpse the beast and are not yet prepared for the future that is to emerge from the unknown. As Cathy put it, a future that has yet to present itself, but already exists.

For some participants, to tolerate and indeed active seeking of the ـنـ, may potentially require a bigger boat. A containing object not simply to offer the semblance of safe passage through the depths of grief. An object in which to entertain the idea of exploration, navigation, and engagement with the unknown. An exploration that is driven, not only in the external results, the gains for the organisation, but by a deeper sense of the ـنـ within.

However, if the ـنـ requires that bigger boat, how will it not simply be rejected by the organisation in the mind, much in the way a transplanted organ is often rejected by the body into which is planted? How might a mind, conditioned from birth to value rationality and knowing, be convinced that being in a state close to madness at the edge of potential catastrophic change lead to a good thing? What the 'lived life' and 'story told' of participants suggested was that by varying degrees, ـنـ was appealing and useful to some. The ـنـ becomes

for the leader the new paradoxical organisation in the mind alongside the establishment, a way of thinking that makes no sense on paper, but can support a bigger vision.

This chapter sought to grapple with the findings going beyond the use of ﺵ in the grief from deathblows, towards the birth of the creative edge that the ﺵ might offer. The next chapter seeks to understand how the ﺵ might become a committed object in the leader's mind, through the creation and use of a superordinate object.

Chapter 13

Superordinate Object

Finding a higher order in chaos

Having given birth to the idea in the mind that the ـﺳ exists at the edge of the irrational, and that such a universal force might be a suitable container for big ideas, there is the issue of how this might work in reality. Noticing the uncanny and attributing something of the mystical to it is one thing, but how might it work in relation to the existing organisation in the mind? Can it be proved to be a 'good enough' without actually knowing how it works? As Cathy suggested, other leaders in organisations would not be accepting of such words as uncanny, mystical, or even intuition. She therefore chose to use the phrase 'playing in the quantum' as a means of reducing the defensive reaction of others of a 'rational' mindedness.

Quantum is a very useful word since it has a metaphorical quality, which Cathy suggests is more acceptable to the scientific mind. At a very basic understanding, the gravity laws of Newtonian physics, were disturbed by the arrival of quantum mechanics. The rupture in knowing being that at scale beyond visibility of the human eye, at a quantum level, things behave outside these established laws, they behave illogically and make no sense. So too with an organisation in mind based on rationality, the idea of ـﺳ makes no sense.

These two forms of thinking, rationality, and the irrationality of ـﺳ are therefore mutually exclusive propositions, that logically might not be held in mind together. As a temporary situation, such as with Group 2 participants, words such as luck, good timing and serendipity are acceptable everyday language within organisational thinking, but as the participant

narrative shows they are often kept at arms-length, mixed with a sense of doubt. Might for example, someone being held in mind for a new role by another, not simply be the organisation working well.

However with the Group 3 participants, those who want to 'go beyond the gates' with an idea, the ن is felt to offer a higher order than the man-made institutions. The ن for them was something to be paid attention to, to be invited into the thinking. This inviting in would be an anathema to the formations of 'rationality', the equivalent of Newtonian laws of gravity. Such a conflict is shown in the fervent defence against such thinking, in the narrative of Steve, the suggested union of two potential opposing schools of thought, capitalism and faith. The reasoning put forward by Steve being the chaos it would introduce into the system and the questioning of the theological cannon.

Yet when Amy experienced an upturn in incidences of serious behaviour as a chaotic acting out within the system, it was interpreted as a preparation for a trial to come. The disorder proves to be the opportunity for a demonstration of robustness to the institutional guards, a defence of her vision, not being at odds with the future organisation. For her the resulting triumph was achieved because of 'the universe' intervention, there was the idea of a working relationship with ن in her mind.

It was not queried as to how this worked, simply accepted in the mind that it does. This mirrors the issues of quantum physics, which are used in every day practical applications and have established qualities of prediction, but are yet to be fully understood scientifically. As with Freud's uncanny, such interpretation appears to represent a return to a means of thinking that civilised society has overcome with logic. Both in quantum physics and the use of ن to form an SO, it is the acceptance and use of thinking that appears illogical, but somehow achieves a

logical outcome. However, while the ‏ین‎ may be unheimlich, a source of repulsion to institutional thinking, it is perhaps as Freud proposed, that heimlich and unheimlich are one and the same.

As Amy suggested during her *'trial'* by the system, there is a degree of *'lip service'* being played by both sides, a system which acknowledges the need for creative thinking, the expansion of ideas, but also that there is a need for the organisation to contain what is perceived as the fearful introduction of chaos. The ‏ین‎ appeared to make sense to some participants because they saw it as part of a larger system, a force of influence which cannot be seen. That the illogical makes sense of chaos is the paradox that needs to be held in mind alongside the organisational dread of irrationality, the dominant organisation-in-the-mind.

The unfolding relationship with ‏ین‎

How this inner relationship with ‏ین‎ was understood, how the paradoxical state of mind was formed, appeared different for various individuals. Each seemed to find their own way to be at peace with it, both internally and externally. The degree of separation from what the organisation felt was going on and what the leaders experienced internally was also an important factor as to what degree a game was being played.

However, I would suggest from the evidence in the participants' narrative, it was more a relationship akin to a dance of systems, in which the lead varied. With Peter for example, the unconscious or subconscious is recognised, but the authority is felt to be with the participant. The subconscious can be *'battered'* into influencing *'it'* over time. The belief was that by relentless positivity, the uncanny would be attracted to the authority and vision of the leader.

Negativity or unwanted outcomes are felt to be a matter of perspective related to time, the full situation not having yet 'unfolded'.

For others, such as Cathy, their body was the instrument of relating to the unknown 'other', the antenna for tuning in to the ∽. There was a subtle difference in the lead position. In the former there is more knowing, while in the latter, there was a greater sense of staying with the unknown, acknowledging the unknown as a guide to how to proceed. Both are prepared not to rush into decision making if the ∽ is sensed, but there was more of giving of authority to the 'other' with Cathy.

It would appear, from the narrative of Brian, that for him there is sometimes a tension in the dance regarding how much can be said and how much ∽ thinking could be acknowledged. The ∽ was acknowledged as having an interesting influence, while the logic must be shown to take the lead. Brian struggles for instance to speak of a collective unconscious, this would be an admission of something universally influencing, but is more comfortable describing a *'second system'* within, which is faster and can make ∽ predictions or decision-making. Faced with a large number of choices, an intuition can pick one option out at random, which then logically needs closer analysis, but the ∽ somehow located in the right place to focus. The authority remained on the side of logic, but the ∽ was playing a part.

There seemed to be a common belief in the 'other' and how it might be approached, but there were also clearly moments when more could have been said, and the participant was close to saying, but the lead voice seemed necessarily to be with the logical organisation in the mind. However, in the narrative it was clear at times that there was, perhaps a greater intimacy with

the � which the likes of Amy, Brian and Peter didn't wish to speak of, it would be too much to give voice too.

Cathy on the other hand, was more open to voicing her relationship with the ڛ, but was clear there were limitations on language to be used in the corporate setting. This attunement to the external organisation in context will be looked at in the next chapter. In the narrative of Cathy, she was open to speaking of the expectation of 'miracles' on a daily basis, that the relationship with ڛ should be more widespread and less of a taboo. What her narrative evidenced was a story of desire to enable such relationships with ڛ and of the potential yield of knowledge or wisdom that might emanate from openness with the irrational. This relationship being a form of preparation for what might wish to unfold in ڛ.

The organisational background could be said, along with experiences rooted in childhood development, to influence the dance with the 'other'. Such as Peter fighting against bureaucracy, Cathy wishing to be part of a large community, and Amy wishing to push a more inclusive vision of education. There was a fusing of past, present, and future through the ڛ. It was the dance with the ڛ which appears to offer the possibility of the superordinate object that is more accepting of chaos. The chaos that comes from trying to invite a big vision, to affect paradigm change.

The leap of faith and never going back

The aim of this section is to understand how some participants take forward their ش experience and form a permanent SO in a belief which influences their leadership thinking. A belief on which they never go back from, and which involved a leap of faith.

Sustaining the idea of the ش as an alternative way of thinking, beyond a temporary transitional use, in a way that proved useful in leadership, as a select few of the participants have evidenced, requires a formative step. This in many ways is a 'leap of faith', the forming of a permanent internal object, a superordinate object to which they are committed.

Before understanding how the group made use of such an object in the thinking, it is prudent to pause for a moment to clarify what is meant by a superordinate object. The object relates to a person or some other thing that is of interest for the satisfaction of desire, an internal representation. In this case the experience of ش rather than a fleeting experience, becomes a thing, an object which becomes a part of the interior psychic workings of the individual. Yet it is more than a representation, an idea among others, since it is a superordinate object. An object above others, appointed with authority, ordained to set in order other objects.

If leaders, such as those interviewed, who are to an extent extraordinary are to create an SO which has at its core an acknowledgement of the ش, there is inherent a source of potential conflict. An individual who feels in themselves a natural sense that they are a leader and is adequately supported, psychologically contained by the organisation, may be unlikely to wish to create such a SO incorporating ش in their thinking. Since to do so would be in conflict with the organisation in mind and their established sense of self.

However narratives revealed that during a rupture in the containment of the organisation which significantly impacted on their perception of being extraordinary, there was a period where they are uncanny in themselves. There is a space in which there is a need, an openness in a period of grief for the loss of that idealised object of being a leader, searching for other objects which help to make sense.

As demonstrated in the participants' narratives, there were two main impacts of the rupture, uncertainty as to their current and future identity, as well as a worry the fracture in the sense of containment could be an indication of the organisation's imminent death. Both of these are likely cause a significant anxiety and need to be resolved somehow in order to restore equilibrium.

It is my contention that rather than simply find another organisation which will offer leadership possibilities or get things *'back on track'*, a small group demonstrated a need to go beyond this solution. They effectively wished to change their relationship with the organisation-in-the-mind and how they saw themselves as leaders. A decision with real impacts as to how they envisage the future of themselves and their organisations.

If they took the leap of faith, they are effectively saying that they are not going to dismiss their experience or relegate it to simply being an oddity hastily consigned to past memory. Instead, they are going to use that experience to navigate in a new way. To see the world in a way in which the paradox of the irrational is considered part of their internal decision-making process, a permanent member of the board, a recognised part of who they are. The leap of faith is therefore a commitment to the awareness, use, and permanent incorporation of ش into their thinking.

How then is this SO formed and what are the reasons and obstacles to its permanent position and incorporation in the structure of their thinking? The first thing was for the leader, the experience of ڛ is considered in a mind, strong enough not to be neglected. That is not to say the mystical can be proven, but simply there is enough uncanny circumstances to satisfy the belief that the ڛ is a something, an 'other'.

So for example, as Amy started to notice a pattern that when she needed something critical to the implementation of her big vision, such as legal advice, that 'the universe' provided it. A past pupil arrived unexpectedly to offer pro bono legal advice. Things happened which were recognised as more than mere coincidence or chance. By putting out the need to the universe and the uncanny events that subsequently occurred, the image of a 'listening ear' was formed in her mind.

There was a primal thinking, that the universe was not separate from us, but was an energy to be tuned into, which could provide containment of 'the vision' idea. The SO of 'the universe' became a cohabitant to the organisation-in-the-mind. There was the external establishment, which had failed to get **'it'**, what the vision was and there is the SO, which listened, provided and contained.

However, one of the difficulties with the group of leaders interviewed is that they are all successful. There was little if any evidence provided that the SO was disastrous. Yet it is made clear in the data that the SO is not a replacement for the establishment. Brian outlines his SO as a 'System 2' of thinking, one which is quicker, and sometimes superior to cognitive thinking, but not to be used to the exclusion of rationality. But he was open to the evidence for him that this sub conscious second system can make leaps, which could not be rationally explained, the outcomes being more than a luck.

There were also occurrences which he felt could be experienced as an approaching, a feeling of déjà vu, which required a decision to give voice to that ڛ sense. For Brian, close to the calling this second system 'mystical', held himself in check with the first system, a risk calculating logic. The point was that if it is recognised as 'other', a pattern in the mind is formed over time and is tested in the organisational context, a risk is taken that the ڛ has something to say which the establishment is not able to provide, and it may find hard to tolerate.

This SO, be it called 'the universe', 'system 2', 'it', appears to offer additional support, but is unknown and unknowable, irrational, and nonlinear, it cannot be commanded, but is taken as a representative of something helpful and visionary. Yet paradoxically, it was the SO which could encompass failures, death of ideas and collapsing paradigms, in that regard the death instinct is also incorporated. The SO, containing the ڛ experiences could result in the 'shedding' of skin, the getting rid of objects, relationships, organisations which are felt to hinder the SO. So, a religion for example is renounced, a relationship terminated, an unexpected career move made, which will make no sense to others.

If anything they were likely to suggest it was a sign of madness, understandable perhaps, particularly in the light that the individuals about to make 'the leap' were fully aware of how it might lead to being ostracised, left marginalised, close to expulsion from the systems of which they inhabit. However, the SO for them makes sense of such shedding, offers the potential of creative killing of the existing paradigm, creating a new order. The SO appeared to authorise the leader in a way that the organisation had failed to do.

It was also a pure leap of faith since the evidence is not of a scientific nature and goes against the original organisation-in-the-mind. Despite the truly unknown outcomes of which the SO may produce and the price which may be paid for being so close to the edge of chaos, these

participants appeared to see their leadership added to by the formation of an SO which had ݭ at its core.

In some ways, the superordinate object might be thought of as extending the leaders status to recognise their extraordinary vision. They may see themselves as far from the metaphorical corporate fireside, the comfortable knowing of the establishment, but despite the risks they feel more of a leader and closer to the edge point of where the future is unfolding as a result. They are bigger visionaries than the organisation may permit, but they are supported and contained by the ݭ incorporated SO formation. The SO enables them to better tolerate the unknown as a result and to shed skin when needed, without resort to melancholy.

It is difficult to capture that sense of being in the anxiety of the unknown, holding the tension to see what will emerge from the dark. As Brian postulated, when it happens the first time you commit to saying what the 'other' is almost inaudibility communicating, it is terrifying. Also that the unknowing never gets easier. However, he suggests that over time one gets better at *'going with it'* until one no longer stops to think, it becomes a part of thinking. As a result one learns to bear what seems unbearable. But once done, a leap of faith is taken with no going back.

It is important however to at least acknowledge that some of these individuals may have been better prepared in their early development for this SO formation. For some there was a sense of fundamental curiosity, and the death blows of life seemed only to give greater impetus to understanding 'other' formulations of how the universe might be. A resilience formed perhaps from having endured being at the edge of groups, being thought odd and acting counter to the tide of the majority. However, as Brian succinctly puts it, where he is now is probably a payoff for all of that past. A revelation which came to him in the interview. How might this belief in

futures yet unseen, have emerged from a necessary defence against the injuring harsh realities of that present?

This leads me to the final point on why SO formations and a committing leap of faith may have occurred for these individuals. The loss of an object, be it an actual death of a person or the death of an idea, is not just about the ideal object, it is about all the futures that idea may have led to. It is not simply a pining for the loss of what was, but also the loss of what might have been. For example, the failure of an 11+ looked at in the context of a whole career, whilst a deep blow, might be overcome through sheer determination. The participant may become a very successful leader as a result. Yet, it is like a fracture in the timeline of expectation, while he ultimately appeared to get back on track, internally there remains the failed expectations of the system. What might his responses have been to the 'unknowing' experience of a new government, had that fracture not occurred.

One can never truly know, but Kevin's defensive narrative that *'it is all dust in the end'*, suggests the lingering melancholy for what might have been. So too with Steve, the blow which caused his fortuitous transition to the private sector, deprived him of the future which would be awarded with a CBE for long service as a civil servant.

The point is that the SO formation, the inclusion of ﺱ thinking appears to offer a destiny which incorporates lost futures as well as makes sense of the blows. Participants felt that they have been put on the right track by the impact, as opposed to have being knocked off track. The SO offered a certainty, while acknowledging the door that was not gone through. It also gave a sense of security that the anxiety endured is a necessary part of a greater destiny.

These leaders' futures are felt to be closer to where they should be. They are thought to be more in line with an authentic self because of the SO formation, arising from their vision and

existence of ﺍ incorporated in their decision-making process. In fact for some participants looking back on their careers, they seem only to regret that their vision was not bigger or greater.

One stand out participant however is Cathy for whom the death blows from an early formative age, led to the expansion of her commitment to her SO to such an extent that she formed her own external organisation. She 'shed the skin' of relationships and organisational establishment in order to better attune her ﺍ thinking into a daily expectation. An expectation that the belief in miracles should become commonplace. How such a progressive belief and commitment can be folded back into the dominant thinking is explored in the next chapter.

Chapter 14

Finding space for ﺵ in the contemporary organisation

If the use of ﺵ can become a substantial part of the leaders thinking in the formation of an SO, how might it be of use in the contemporary organisation? Particularly in light of the ever diminishing boundaries and hierarchies within global organisations, where a high degree of interconnectivity can result in unexpected outcomes, such as identified in complexity theory. Might such turbulence be likely to create anxiety, which has the tendency to make people look to old defences and ways of thinking, to find understanding in the unknown.

It is important to note that most of the research group were on the cusp or looking towards retirement and this might mean there was a certain degree of sentimentality for a 'bygone age', an age which could appear to simplify and provide equilibrium in the mind. The other issue with this demographic was the need for leaders to feel they were leaving a legacy which could transcend their lifespan. Indeed the need of the idealised internal object, symbolising a good organisation might be ever more present in periods of conflict and pandemic, where death appears indiscriminate, and unexpected. However, I believe that the data goes much further than that. While death lurks in the narratives of most, there is a collective sense of leadership, as represented by the containing establishment, might itself be at deaths door.

As one participant recalls, the ability to access a 'universe' or at least be better situated at the portal where futures emerge is the 'last lever to pull'. The use of the ﺵ formation within an SO may well be the activity associated in the lead up to 'catastrophic change' at a society level. Much as there was a strange surge in belief of the supernatural and spiritualism during World War I, with death and mourning being commonplace. Such form of unrestricted thinking which accepts a degree of irrationality may actually be an advantage in containing anxiety during

turbulent times. For leadership the ability to stay in the unknown, the mental space of 'negative capability' may demonstrate to followers the resilience and creativity that can be found by listening to the inner feelings that are too readily dismissed, because of the anxiety provoked.

Brian demonstrated this form of leadership, which not only draws on the established organisation in the mind and personal history, but can consider the possibility of other dimensions, other sources of guidance. He was also clear that such thinking at the edge is what an organisation needs, since without such thinking, those at the 'campfire' will not see what is coming, what might be the next big thing. Such thinking at the edge of irrational sources, alternative dimensions, whilst in need of containment appears also to be a potential source of creativity.

This type of thinking incorporating ﺱ in a SO may also demonstrate a better position in regard to loss, that the death instinct could be considered as potentially creative. Sometimes organisations need to make 'leaps of faith', abandon an established way of doing things and leaders who are able to tolerate unheimlich might have a dual perspective which leaves them better placed to be the avant-garde in paradigm shifts.

Such leaders may be less anxious in considering speculative possibilities, aware that the unknown is an active part of the known, and indeed they may need to be held in mind together. Great leaps of paradigm might be made if the ﺱ is somehow factored into and enabled, along with the established organisation in the mind.

This way of thinking can be demonstrated in the existing 'established thinking' in the fields of quantum mechanics and maths. It is the trusting to symbolise the unknown and contain it within the established logic, which enables being okay with not knowing and not being able to explain

where experiences come from. This ability from leaders in the two fields mentioned, mathematics and physics, resulted in huge leaps forward.

In a way these things which don't make sense, don't conform to the current knowledge and logical approach can be thought of as some part of a phenomena which is yet to be analysed. That we are simply missing pieces of a cosmic puzzle. However, what I am suggesting is that what might be required, and perhaps of value in consulting to organisations, is an understanding of the establishment in need of alternative thinking, which may require new forms of logic.

As for an organisation and its leaders, it may be that it is at the very edge of being displaced from heimlich, perhaps close to catastrophic change, which opens leaders to such thinking. It is potentially the grief of identity loss, that makes individuals uncanny to themselves and opens up thinking to the mystical, to alternative dimensional thinking

However, this is not to say that we need to manufacture organisational or personal death blows to access such $ش$ and SO formation. The leaders who have demonstrated SO formation, even if only shared within their close containing groups, or perhaps even their own mind, effectively take the possibility back into the organisation. After all the organisation-in-the-mind is also the-mind-in-the-organisation. As Brian demonstrated in working at a government level, there was often the feeling of bashing one's head against the wall, until the right resonance was reached, until what was repeatedly expelled from establishment, tipped into making sense. The turbulent context of external events such as a pandemic, helping in that paradigm shift.

As previously mentioned, such paradigm shifts may retrospectively be labelled as 'business sense'. Yet it was a holding onto the 'makes no sense' by leaders with an $ش$ incorporating SO that actually preceded this. As with Lorenz's (1963) 'butterfly diagram' and Bion's (1961) 'binocular vision', it is the ability to hold a unified whole in mind, whilst allowing perspective

to change from one dimension to another, which enables negative capability and the potential emergence of new ideas. As well as the death of existing ones.

Summary

A leader's development is unlikely to be without moments of significant doubt and anxiety. However a death blow, a blow to the very inner core of identity can be traumatic. The impact and resultant loss of the internal ideal object of the leader can lead to a period of mourning and deep reflection. Amidst this turbulence, when an individual can feel derailed from themselves leading to experiences of the uncanny, there is also a potential opportunity. By the very nature of mourning, things are in extreme flux, nothing is as it should be, and there is a reaching out to make sense of things. However, there is also a reaching back to long forgot ways of thinking, a renewed sensitivity to perception of the deepest unknowing, a tuning in to the ش.

This is not 'comfortable territory', being rooted in horror, fear, and dread. So while for some the ش may be a potential access to other dimensions of thinking, where irrationality, synchronicity and miracles make sense, for many the wish appears to be to get back on the established track without delay. Even if that means putting on a face for the containing organisation. For such individuals the desire is that the ش experience be downgraded and consigned to a 'strange time'. However I believe this territory is not just a private individual matter. The need to make sense appears also to be a reflection of fracture in the organisation's ability to support the leadership ideal, which in turn may also highlight a fissure in the culture of the time.

Indeed with organisations where there is no sense of clear boundaries, and formulised hierarchies in the decline and virtualised interconnectivity requiring even more from a leader, it is likely these fractures, these uncontained blows to identity and self are more likely to increase.

Yet, there are some who are able to linger with the ∽ experience, to remain both curious and anxious, hold on to the grief induced alternative thinking. While too often for the organisation, what is hoped for is a comforting campfire of rationality and knowing, with such ideas of mysticality appearing too readily marginalised, dismissed, or ridiculed. Some might go so far as to suggest it is at the edge of madness to consider such things in a place of work. The preference for slow incremental risk free progress being the priority, but one which may have hidden risks in a fast moving environment of growing complexity. However, the alternative might be that this marginalised irrationality, might indicate a moribund thinking within an organisation. The all-consuming hold and need for rationality, the dominant need of establishment may itself be a source of organisational pathology.

An organisation unable to face even the idea of its own mortality being inclined towards a 'closed system' is ever fearful of its demise, defending against what irrationality may have to offer. This is particularly poignant when we think of chaos as actually being a higher unseen order, the ∽ being the constant conjunction to all we know.

These leaders with a formed SO appear more open to the ∽ experience but are not sorcerers. They are subject to the same laws of gravity we all are, but they are exceptional. They have put themselves on the edge of thinking, which may appear to others as chaotic and close to madness. However, they have taken their ∽ experience and formed a SO, an inner

representation of a universal force from which they take authority, envisaging a destiny which includes paradigm change.

Such leaders appear prepared to make a 'leap of faith' that puts the ش unreservedly in their decision making, with an overriding capability to make sense in a different frame of mind. A framework which accepts the irrationality, as well as being made 'other' by the organisation, which comes with the uncomfortable territory.

Yet while there are risks, and these individuals appear not to dismiss the establishment, their organisational-in-the-mind contains a new perspective, an additional or alternative point of view. One which can take precedence over the dictates of the organisational establishment and the psychological rules by which the ego operates. While the superego and the internalised dictates of the organisation offer a containment and relief from the unknown, the addition of an SO offers an edge. An edge potentially terrifying in the same moment as it is life affirming.

It is not the proving of the ش which is sought or important, but simply that the unknowing, which creates unlimited futures, can be held in the mind. The return to the time before time, primal thinking long overcome, has a place in making leaps, changing paradigms, and inspiring followers. However, much in the same vain as Alice, it is wise to read the label and in reality such leaps are not for the faint hearted.

Chapter 15

Contributions

The Research Field

When we go to work in an organisation, there is an implicit agreement, that in our role we will be contained psychologically, there will be a relative equilibrium between how we integrate our sense of self, our conscious and unconscious needs, along with the needs of the system. In its most basic form, something is brought into a system, there is a process within a boundaried container, and there is an output. A means by which the organisation retains its existence and grows, in the context of the surrounding environment. As consultants, we are aware of how parts of the organisation relate to each other, how this may represent something of the interplay of the unconscious needs of the individuals and groups, alongside the organisational culture. However, consultants are also aware the way organisations, groups, and individuals behave may appear irrational and not run as a machine might; a predominant metaphor in organisational management.

This conflictual situation may be not only because of the difficult nature of the work, and the unconscious responses to it, such as dealing with terminal patients for example, but might also be because of the group behaving as if there is a hidden task, which they feel they are bound to carry out. So the issue of irrationality is nothing new in consulting from the systems-psychodynamic perspective.

However, while there may be irrationality in the organisational behaviour or within the group's performance, 'as if' they were there for another purpose, this is not where I see the ٻ and SO formation.

The use of irrationality, which has come from the research, was understood by leaders who were not restricted by the established gravity of the organisation in its current context. The ٻ does not emerge into awareness because of the day-to-day agreement of work. The ٻ is an unseen 'other' regardless of such agreements.

Yet, as the small group researched demonstrates, the ٻ may represent an important element in the rupture, repair, and advancement of thinking in the idea of leadership. The self as leader, invested in the organisation for conscious and unconscious reasons when experiencing a failure in that containing relationship, appeared to, turn to a primal way of thinking for containment.

What I am proposing, is that above the ever present gravity of the organisation in the mind and the persistent requirements of the superego upon thinking, there is a third perspective, that can be brought in to provide help. A way of thinking that appears to have been marginalised by the gravity and knowing of the establishment itself, the taboo of mystical thinking long ago repressed. I am suggesting that the emergence of ٻ in thinking and the formation of a SO, rather than being a sign of individual pathology is an opening up of self to other dimensions of thought, in response to organisational fractures in containment.

This is a situation which may be in the process of being unwound, that the group researched shared an appetite for such ٻ in thinking. While for some as a temporary transitional object in the service of the mourning loss, but for other leaders, a possibility in advancement of alternative thinking.

Recommendations for consultancy

A great deal of the system psychodynamic approach in consulting to organisations is based on an awareness of the unconscious processes within individuals and groups, the interactions across organisational boundaries, as well as the issues of authority and process within a system. All within the ever changing context with the greater environment.

Such unconscious processes are themselves contained within the psychoanalytic establishment. Irrationality, from this psychological perspective, could be interpreted as a signs of neurosis, regressive behaviour, organisational 'acting out'. Indeed, the foundation stone of psychoanalytic thinking is bound to the concept of the unconscious, an influencing force from which cannot be directly witnessed and is itself often without apparent rationality. Also a key instrument in a consultative stance is the ability to not rush to judgement, but to stay with attention to what has not been said, what the melody is in the background, what the resonance of the issue might reveal.

Yet paradoxically, it appears to be a strong taboo to suggest that a mystical 'other' may play a part, that the experience of uncanny could access alternative ways of perceiving and making decisions. I would suggest the following as an opening of further opportunities for expanding consultative perspectives.

- How might an emergent belief in a speculative object, such as the ﺱ in a leadership narrative, might be considered as offering a viable warning response to what might be considered the over establishment of rational thought?

- Whilst 'magical thinking' might in itself suggest an indication of pathology, it might also express need for leadership to be provided with better containment, which is found to be lacking in the organisational structure.

- The exploration of paradox, the ability to hold two mutually exclusive proportions in mind without the need of resolution, is a skill which may lead to better knowing some of the underlying organisational paradoxes, along with the potential creative understanding that brings.

- Taboo around the thinking of ش at work may represent an underlying issue, and it might be useful for leaders to understand where an organisation's ideas or thoughts originate for leaders.

- How might the opening up of alternatives to establishment dominated thinking be approached, where are edge conditions created in the leadership thinking?

- How might things that 'make no sense on paper' be thought of as useful to organisations where knowledge is often felt to be the answer to any question?

- How can an organisation build in space for the suspension of logical thinking?

A thread that runs through all of these points for expanding consultative perspectives is that they help move thinking towards the reparative by holding on to a curiosity as to what the presence of ش in leadership might mean. Rather than seeing such ش emergence in the consultative space as something indicating the pathological, it might also be considered as a

creative search for alternative dimensions which seek to recovery and provide resilience in periods of uncertainty. The unheimlich, by revealing what should have remained hidden, potentially has the reparative power to create a new heimlich.

Chapter 16

Conclusion

The نن may be thought of as an individual issue, some might say a private matter, one which has no value in the workplace or in consultancy to organisations. However, the narratives of the leaders within this research would suggest otherwise. It would suggest that there is a failure of containment in some organisations. These organisations were not able to provide an alternative way of thinking other than that in the established view, there was no room for symbolic play. There was little provision for containing the paradox of the irrational being of value in a rationality predominant society.

On one level, the suggestion of نن in leadership thinking is a taboo and therefore suggests something shameful. However, as participants evidenced, it was useful as a temporary transitional object during a turbulent period. Periods when the self-identity of the leader was felt to be in question, either as a result of traumatic shifts within the organisation or because the organisation through its systems, failed in the psychological contract with the leadership. So use of نن thinking could be an indication of separation and loss within the organisation – leadership dyad. Mourning in organisations and the effects on leadership thinking leading to نن use.

However, what نن thinking also appeared to hold was the potential to take leadership to a different level, one more visionary and resilient. Without claiming to be mystics, some leaders were able to ignite a 'long forgotten' way of thinking, irrational to the establishment, but containing to the leader. A way of looking at things that, while not without risk, was a useful antidote to a smothering of alternative thinking by the establishment.

Organisational consultancy might be well served by considering such thinking as potentially making sense at a higher unseen level and that SO formation could make paradigm change more readily possible. Bion himself paid a heavy price in order to consider the mystical as an element within thinking, shunned by the psychoanalytic establishment of the time and having to travel abroad to further his work and thinking. Ultimately however, some parts of the establishment came to accepting that he was ahead of his time.

However, the establishment by its very nature, constantly seeks to rid itself of the art of unknowing and it takes a great leader to offer darkness, where there is so much light. Consultancy owes it to the likes of Bion and others to take back the value in unknowing, to incorporate an element of ٻ as the organisations of the future might depend on it.

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Appendix A

Literature search overview table

An exploration of the uncanny and mystical influences developing leadership thinking, in the context of rising technological complexity and declining organisational certainty.	EthOS		PEPWeb		EBSCO		Total Relevant Hits
	Total Hits	Relevant Hits	Total Hits	Relevant Hits	Total Hits	Relevant Hits	
Search Terms							
The Uncanny	51	7	68	7	976	70	84
The Mystical	159	13	16	6	759	22	41
Leadership thinking	0	0	1	1	156	17	18
technological complexity	3	0	108	8	75	6	14
organisational uncertainty	1	1	61	10	12	0	11
				TOTAL POSSIBLE RESEARCH PAPERS			168

			Papers snowballed from 168 references lists				39
			TOTAL PAPERS FOR FIRST SIFT				207

	First sift		**Papers discarded due to lack of relevance**				-15
	Second sift		**Papers discarded as not peer reviewed**				-6

			TOTAL PAPERS FOR REVIEW				186

Appendix B

Biographical Data Chronology / Thematic Field Analysis

Biographic Data Chronology	Thematic co-field analysis
1964 Born (Age 55 at date of interview) **1982 Attended University** **1984 Age 20** While at Uni diagnosed with Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma, considered a 'pretty much a death sentence' at time. 'The night before' chemotherapy, specialists couldn't see anything on biopsies. **1988 Age 24**, On a long-haul flight mentally conversed with her grandmother. Later found Grandmother had died unexpectedly during the time of the flight. **1989 Age 25**, Started practising Buddhism. **1991 Age 27** Became youngest director of multinational investment bank. **1996 Age 32** Decided to retire from the banking. Set up a non-profit retreat centre. **2003 Age 39** Birth of daughter **2009 Age 45** Started an Organisation to introduce 'mind training' into the corporate world.	**Report** about expected career in banking. **Report** about diagnosis, doctors, hospitals and second opinions **Narrative** about Others praying, meditating, and thinking of her at the same time when doctors were looking at biopsies. **Evaluation** of life, lived so far, how with privilege comes responsibility. The need to be creative and find effective ways to serve others. **Narrative** about close spiritual connection with Grandmother and conversation in her head pleading for her not to go, being left with a missing connection. **Narrative** about strange coincidences while searching for people like Grandmother, people who believed in something more. **Evaluation** need to be part of something bigger. **Report** about career path and global leadership. **Narrative** Sensed it was time to take 'mind training' into corporate world following experiences, 'tuning in' to other.

2017 Age 53 started divorce proceedings after husband cut his hand off. **2018 Age 54** Became interested in 'active breath work' and silent retreats.	**Evaluation** sensing into wise choices would be good for organisations and for business. **Narrative** about serendipity of meeting key people in setting up business. **Narrative** on emotional troubles and responses to mental crisis **Evaluation** of traumatic/peace experiences that left 'anti-fragile' tempering. Wish to hold paradox of good & bad. Need to 'shed skin' and judge things differently.

Appendix C

Research journal extract, Flow Diagram

Death | **Birth** | **Superordinate Object**

Start

1 **Balance**
a) Organisational Status Quo
b) Equilibrium — Known / Unknown
c) Libidinal investment within Organisation

2 **Perspective**
a) View of reality (idea of 'other' forces)
b) Idea of self (as leader)
c) Relationship with Org / other (who influences who)
d) Internal sense making model

C **Status Quo**
a) Maintenance of Status Quo
b) Common expectation

Context

B **History**
a) Pre Leadership
b) Idea of self
c) worldview
d) Seperation experiences
e) Place, role & experience within Primary Org.

A **Society**
Cultural norms
Existing Paradigms

10 Adaption of S. O. to make digestible

D Malleable paradigms & potentialities

Rupture

3 **Unsettling**
Unexpected event/s
Experience of unknown emergent reality
Signal anxiety in response to unknown

4 **Emergence**
a) Revelation of hidden 'other'
b) Alienation (Self / Org) — Inner self / Org Leadership / Cultural — Taboo
c)
d) Awareness of danger in unknowing (Loss of control / authority)

5 **Psych Defence**
a) Response to experience of chaos / irrationality / senses
b) Aggression towards 'other'
c) Formation of False self

Liminal Space

6 **Search for meaning**
a) Attempts to realign unsettling experience with pre-rupture state
b) Identification of different sense making possibilities
c) Mourning lost object
i) Tolerance of chaos
g) Experience of timelessness
d) Searching for possible alternative understanding of emergence
e) Assessment of uncertainty in incorporating unknown 'other'
f) Formation of temp / perm Superordinate Object (S. O.)

Containment

7 **The Leap**
a) Embracing of unknown in paradigm shift
b) Use of S. O. as psych container
c) Assessment of libidinal investment

8 **Future Self**
a) Openness to future emergence of 'other'
b) Influence on thinking of rupture experience
c) Active challenging of paradigms

9 **Future Org**
a) Need for constrained organisational chaos / irrationality
b) Speculative stance towards 'other' unseen forces
c) Consideration of the Superordinate Object
d) Sense of future Purpose

Participant 1: 'Amy', Primary School Head Teacher (Female 50's)

Biographical Data Chronology

1958   Marriage of Amy's parents

1969   Amy born

1980 - 1986   Secondary School [Faith School]

1986 - 1989   University [Theological Studies]

1993   (24)   Son born

1997   Started as Teaching Assistant and Music teacher

2002   (28)   Daughter born

2005   (31)   Marriage

2007   (33)   Son arrested for 'train surfing'

2008   Started as Junior Consultant for Local Authority

2008   Parents in car crash

2016   Started as Head Teacher at Primary School

2017   (43)   Left marriage of 12 years

2017   Renunciation of Catholicism

2017   Started Therapy

2018   Found dead body in street

2019   Posted political response on social media

2019   Disciplinary hearing by Local Authority

2019   Serious breaches of discipline at Primary School

2019   Unannounced inspection by Ofsted

Biographical Data Chronology

Amy was the 1st participant. Aged 51 at the time of the interview, the head of a primary school situated on the outskirts of a large town east of London. Having worked her way from educational consultant to the position of head teacher, Amy had a *'big vision'* for the school as central to educating the community. Within her narration, several pivotal life phases emerged:

Birth

Amy's birth appears to locate, not only the start of her chronological life, but the origin of an important guiding principle, that she was of the centre of things. For her parents, particularly her mother, she was 'centre of their universe'.

Yet there was a sense that a great deal of expectation may have been put on the only child, arriving after 11 years of a marriage. Indeed, Amy's mother's repeated message, *'always lead and let others follow'*, seems to have been a tenant of great gravity and influence throughout Amy's early childhood. A tenant made more complex by the parental view, *'don't be worried about what anyone else does, always do your own thing, stay true to yourself'*.

Early Childhood

The reality of Amy's desire to be the lead at primary school, appeared to be the first time her worldview was challenged. Although Amy wished to be the *'head girl'* she was denied this role by the headteacher. A decision, Amy reflected, based on the headteacher fearing that for Amy the position of leadership potentially dangerous, that Amy might end up a megalomaniac.

Denied the opportunity, Amy's response was to pour her energy into writing a musical version of *'the passion'*, which was to become the *'big thing'* in the final year of primary school. What appeared in the tone of her telling this narrative was the energy of defiance, of railing against constraint.

Adolescence and Early Adulthood

Amy herself identified the continuing pattern of the opportunity in taking the lead being denied, both in secondary school and university. Her response again was to take secondary roles, such as liturgy prefect and college newspaper editor, in which her energy and effort resulted in a musical production which *'eclipsed everyone else'* and a university newspaper which generated a huge readership. A monthly publication which, as Amy put it, *'was gone in seconds of being delivered'*. Amy was clear that in all her endeavours the *'unintentional goal'* was one that ultimately resulted in an emergence of her leadership.

Then age 25, while working in the city, Amy described how her '*fortunes are changed'* when she *'falls pregnant'* the first time she slept with somebody, when she was '*so slim'*. This changed her plans and led to her entering the educational system as a music teacher.

What springs from the narrative is that this, against the odds pregnancy, lead to the interpretation of the random events as being an intervention by 'the universe'. A force beyond her control which was putting her back on track, towards its agenda. Had she not fallen pregnant at that time, she would not have taken up the offer of work closer to home, thereby entering the world of teaching, which she felt to be in line with her destiny.

Adulthood

From the outset of working in education, even whilst a local authority consultant, Amy emphasised that she was not *'stereo typical'* in the roles she took, and often met resistance which she overcame by modelling changes and bringing others along with her vision. She felt her avant-garde approach was supported by serendipitous events and what she referred to as the *'universe listening ear'*. It was the *'tuning in'* to this force that resulted in a synchronicity, 'something at play' beyond the decisions either she or the organisation made.

The synchronicity of *'mixed messages'* and *'missed emails'*, resulted in her working in a *'tiny school'* against the wishes of the Local Authority, enabling her to grow like Alice, until she became head. This then lead to a series of events, the uncanny experiences, which resulted in her *'being tested'* by the establishment authorities.

First Amy's vision is challenged by stakeholders such as Sports England, who ask what Ofsted would make of her big vision approach. This is then followed by an *'horrendous week'*, where she is forced by unpredictable and unprecedented bad behaviour in the school to grapple with the chaotic situation, whilst documenting her response actions. Staff members failed to see why she was going to such lengths, however Amy explained:

> *I've got to take into consideration all the legislation, if we're going to do an Ofsted. If Ofsted were to come in and look at what we do, I have to justify what we're doing with these children.*

> Amy

Meanwhile, in an emotional response on social media to the mayor of London's comments regarding the gang killing of a random young woman, a series of investigations into Amy's leadership at the school were initiated. The police, school governors and local authorities all seek explanation and atonement, but each time Amy thinks she has seen *'the death of it',* more trials ensue.

Then without any warning, Ofsted descend on the school in a response to MI5 concerns and Amy goes through a gruelling examination of all her processes and her leadership is challenged in what she refers to as *'the battle'*. A trial held in secret behind closed doors.

She triumphs, in no small part because all the organisational processes and procedures are demonstrated to be in working order. As a result, she passes the most stringent test of Ofsted, a no formal designation inspection. As a result of this play of serendipity, Amy got the backing of others, such as Sports England, because she had the proof of her integrity, her leadership and vision having been tested by the establishment.

The uncanny experience for Amy was of having a need, which the universe listened to and provided for, through the synchronicity of the horrendous week occurring just before she would be tested by Ofsted, the organisation guardians. Amy describes this period and experience as feeling *'weird'* and *'bizarre'*. Yet also relaying in a mournful tone that the uncanny experience

quickly became contextualised and 'moved on' from, in the bigger picture of the school. It was for her significant for her leadership, in a way the uncanny episode appeared to have strengthened her vision and belief in a force at play, something beyond herself.

However, this happy ending, Amy's attending and being tested in the role of head teacher, the unheimlich narrative of the triumph of the underdog, appeared to hide the true cost. Amy describes her role as being the 'sacrificial lamb' who must go through the trials so others can follow, echoing in a sense the 'passion' narrative for the organisational future, but at a cost to herself.

Amy describes how intimidated others were of her in the role of head and the resulting loss of herself, *'where do I begin and the role end'*. All through her narrative was the metaphor of confinement, the parental tenant, the very image of her arms and legs sticking out of the building, the ill-fitting roles she outgrows and her renunciation. Renunciation of everything for the greater cause, the vision of her school at the centre of things, the centre of a community hub.

Structure

Initially in the transcribing of the interview, one thing that stood out was the lack of any obvious paragraph breaks. Amy spoke for 75 minutes in the first session with little apparent pause, resulting in the experience of a single overwhelming entity of data. Text Structure Sequentialization and colour coding helped visualise emotion patterns, giving some shape to the sense of the Alice in Wonderland adventure. A topsy-turvy narrative in which Amy often becomes enormous in relation to her context. Faced with such a daunting task of understanding Amy's subjectivity, there was an experience of being overwhelmed and a little intimidated by it all.

Yet what proved a valuable key to unlocking this experience, was not so much what was present, but what was an emerging curiosity regarding the absent, where and who really was Amy in the role?

While the narrative structure moved positively from education and career, to Amy's understanding, *'how I ended up where I am'*, it was only by holding a strange tension did Amy

then cross the threshold to discuss the negative side of inhabiting her leadership role. Indeed, the interview might have ended there, a balanced picture of positive and negative.

However, a gentle pointing out, a 'keeping the door ajar', regarding the absence of any uncanny and mystical reference opened Amy's narrative to exploring what she felt was, *'something beyond me'*. An influencing force, *'something at play'*, the concept of the uncanny as a *'universal listening ear'*.

Thematic Analysis

On experiencing Amy's presentation of her life, it would have been tempting to succumb to the 'underdog' versus the system theme woven through the narrative, where Amy's undaunted energy and vision lead to a defining headship. A headship whose followers extend far beyond the school gates.

However, on further analysis several unexpected themes emerged. The first of these was the potential of being consumed by a role, played on behalf of the system. The role in which the individual is at heimlich, is revealed in the uncanny experience as unheimlich to the individual's true self. From the outset, Amy is placed at the centre of the universe, as perhaps most infants are, yet with the tenant *'Always lead and let others follow'* forming a constant desire to be the centre, leading to leadership over shadowing other potential destinies. Might such all-consuming leadership contain the seeds of tragedy, a deep personal cost? A cost in relationships with others and in relationship to self-identity.

The second theme is perhaps a response to such a separation from self in the role of leadership, that being the emergence of another system-in-the-mind, to make an organising sense of random events, represented by *'the universe'* and it's *'listening ear'*. A force which could be relied on by paying attention to the *'serendipity'* of events and *'gut feeling'*. A system which had an unseen organising synchronicity at its heart which provided a deeper meaning than contained in the role of head. This is not necessarily evidence of determinism, but perhaps more a response to what is experienced by Amy as uncanny, a listening ear which provides and makes sense of her *'big vision'*.

There are many thematic threads, loose ends within the fabric of Amy's narrative which might be followed and form a significant object of research, such as to what degree are megalomaniac tendencies a catalyst in organisational leadership? Why does visionary female leadership appear problematic to the system organising education? How might such imbalance between role and personal idiom be addressed?

However, a third theme, only briefly spoken directly of, was the important intimate nature of the uncanny experience. An experience which is then quickly contextualised by the system, 'moved on from'. Yet such a moment was experienced as *'bizarre'* and *'weird'* was deeply impacting for the leader, perhaps mourned for. What might the value to leadership be to hold onto, to discuss and speak of the uncanny before moving on? What is the value lost to the participant and organisation when such experiences are organised, rationalised, moved on from?

> *"Probably the best example of something that in my view, was a, we all said it, 'how bizarre', that we had all that and then that's exactly what Ofsted come in to look at just 3 weeks down the line. It felt weird.*
> *It did feel weird. (9 sec) [door closing in the distance]*
>
> *So, I think that's (5 sec) that probably was the most significant uncanny thing.*
>
> *An' I guess because we've moved past that now.*
> *That's why I, I kind of, em, because we've contextualised that and moved on from it, it just becomes part and parcel of, of what, what we've done at the school.*
>
> *Yet at the time we were, 'this is really bizarre'."*

<div align="right">Amy</div>

Summary and Discussion

Amy is clearly a dedicated individual, a leader with drive, able to bring others along with her *'big vision'*. Her narrative is recognisable as one of triumph of the 'underdog' over being cast

in secondary roles by the organisation. Yet whilst I experienced a sense of euphoria in response to her energy and vision, I was also aware of a sense of fragility and underlying tragedy, the terror that the investigation might be regarding a *'parent's complaint'*.

Also, the seeming need to sacrifice all, the passion, or the suffering in inhabiting the role of head, to be the organisational *'sacrificial lamb'*. A career trajectory defined by above all else, the expectation to lead.

Why then was there a need for a *'universal listening ear'* something at play beyond a binary of the David and Goliath metaphor and why might the uncanny experience for Amy have been a catalyst for the renunciation of all that was heimlich, husband, family, religion?

How might her narrative have played out differently if she'd had siblings, was a middle child for example? Alternatively, how might the participant's world perspective and leadership development have been different if the Catholic context had not played such a prominent role, a system based on the following of a saviour.

Might the emergence or perception of the uncanny, as opposed to the mystical experience, along with the organising principle of synchronicity, represent the failure of the internalised system of organisation in the mind? For Amy, does the uncanny represent the opportunity to tune in to an alternative? An alternative that listens and provides a context beyond the self, beyond the group, the organisation's defined tenants and the certainty that restricted the need for 'Alice' like growth.

However, in the thicket of Amy's story told, there was a momentary clearing, that the uncanny experience was a glimpsed at alternative, a suspension of organisation. I felt deeply her need for me to accept that, even if only for a moment, to be in a clearing with her, before once more moving on, back into the organising system that puts things in context. There seemed to be a truth in that experience, perhaps more real than the illusion of the existing organising system. The uncanny and mystical certainly not to be forgotten.

Amy's narrative in many ways creates more questions than answers. Might the relentless pursuit of leadership be a false self, created by the context and conditions of the time, a House of Cards. There were no clear answers.

<u>Appendix E</u>

Participant 2: 'Kevin' UK Head of Profession, OBE (Male 60's)

Biographical Data Chronology

1957   Kevin born.

1968   Failed 11+ and went to a secondary modern school

1972   Achieved a grade one in GCSE maths (evening class)

1975   First person in school to get an A level in maths and physics

1975 – 1979   University, Civil Engineering Degree

1979 – 1984   County Council, Graduate Trainee Engineer,

+ achieving Professional Chartership

1984 – 1987   Northern Authority, Assistant Divisional Surveyor

1987 – 1991   Assistant Surveyor responsible for agent authorities

1991 – 2001   County Maintenance Manager, promoted to head of service

2002 – 2005   East England Authority, Assistant Director for Highways,

promoted to Assistant Director Planning

2005 – 2013   Local Authority, Director Environment and Transport

2009 – 2014   Central Government, Department for Transport (DfT)

2014 – 2017   Private Sector, Director of Public Services (Senior Management Team)

2017 – 2019   Private Sector, UK Head of Profession (Local Government Discipline)

Biographical Data Chronology

Kevin was the second participant. Age 62 at the time of interview and in the final years of his career. He was someone who had been honoured by the Queen and there was a sense of expectation to the interview, which was also the shortest. From his narrative a number of life phases were identified.

Childhood

Kevin describes his childhood as *'quite idyllic'* growing up in the countryside and being *'leader of the gang'* right from primary school. He felt he was driven always wanting to do well and please his parents. However, he unexpectedly failed his 11+, which affected him, leaving him feeling *'second-class'*.

Adolescence

He struggled in the local secondary modern school. The subjects were to him gender-based, aimed at the rural community and he knew he needed a language, as well as strong maths to have any hope of going to university. He had to *'fight for that'* challenging the school authorities, as well as doing additional night classes *'outside of the school'*.

Early Adulthood

His struggle continued into university, *'quite near'* to getting a 1st. Yet he felt fortunate to be *'the only graduate'* in a County Council program, being *'really well looked after'* spending time in *'every part'* of the highway organisation, gaining professional chartership as a result. It was there that he saw his future, what he *'ultimately'* wished to do was to be a County Surveyor, then the pinnacle of the civil engineering hierarchy. He felt driven to this objective but knew that since he was not a *'highflyer'* he would have to do it in *'steady steps'*.

Adulthood

Kevin then proceeded to climb the hierarchy steadily, careful of the danger in staying *'too long in one place'*, moving every few years to avoid the trap of *'dead man's shoes'*. Constantly moving sometimes meant taking a *'sideways'* lower paid position in the hope of better prospects. This also involved living away from home during the week for years at a time.

Yet he felt driven, as he put it, '*I had this inside me, that I knew'*, even when his supportive wife thought him *'mad'*. He was always prepared to put his *'hand up'* and move for a secondment opportunity, to be out of his *'comfort zone'*, but equally taking calculated risks. However, he also acknowledged being '*quite lucky'*, being in the right *'moment'* and gaining momentum from the times that, *'suddenly provide those opportunities or give you the confidence',* that helped to make progress.

One of the key uncanny incidents for Kevin appeared to be meeting a director who he recalled, *'frightened me to death'* with his risk-taking and ruthless downsizing. However, what also disturbed Kevin was this top director's age, being as he was in his 30s. Yet what he took from this encounter was to keep the focus on what would 'ultimately' get him to his goal, *'the crown'* of being a director and being *'in the chair'* wherever possible.

This he felt was ultimately recognised through the award of his OBE for services to local government. However, he also had to make major transitions, such as to the private sector, which left him *'at risk'* requiring him to *'recalibrate'* himself quickly. Yet again, luck appeared to intervene through a series of *'strange acquisitions'*, the organisation he worked for being acquired three times, he found himself being at *'the right place at the right time'*. Although he said this could have been his *'very proactive'* nature, just as much as *'myth, magic or luck'*.

Structure

The structure of Kevin's narrative in many ways reflected his philosophy of *'steady steps'*. It was smooth from telling, a predictable railway line of events, almost hypnotic in cadence. Yet, there were moments, glimpses of things that 'disturb' him and the flow of the interview, such as talking about meeting individuals completely alien to his take on leadership.

Perhaps the most bizarre experience of the interview however happened just beyond the boundary of its end. In the fog outside, a church bell tolled mutedly, and Kevin took it as the end, even though it later transpired it was the quarter hour chime and the end came 15 minutes too early.

As I drove away I was seized with a desire to drive off the main road into a neighbouring woods, to find the darkest place possible, away from everything. Then when I stopped at a garage, I experienced a surge of overwhelming almost euphoric energy and the fear of coming into contact with anyone. The intensity of these impulses and feelings dissipated quickly, but in a way they were still within the timeframe of the interview and very powerful in relation to it.

Thematic Analysis

Beyond the often CV like nature of Kevin's narrative, a number of themes emerged. The first of these being death. In a way Kevin's failure of his 11+ was a sort of near-death experience, the death of achieving the parental hopes, '*what they wanted*' leaving him in a social unheimlich, devoid of academic opportunity. The shock that he wasn't a '*highflyer*' and the underlying feeling of being '*second class*'. Yet the rupture of expectation was in some way repaired being '*the only graduate*' in his new heimlich of engineering

Kevin then recognises something key to his leadership development, the need to avoid '*dead man's shoes*', the phrase used to describe waiting for a position to be vacated by the death, be that metaphorically in retirement or actual death of a resident other. His strategy was always to be on the move, not to get stuck in a '*comfort zone*,' a sort of dead space.

However, this appears to be taken to a new level by meeting his doppelgänger, someone of his age, but someone that frightened him to death, because of their ruthless focus and risk taking. Someone prepared to downsize, kill off roles, with potentially real death results. Kevin assigning the death of colleagues as potentially being linked to this disturbing individual's actions. Yet this individual also had a profound influence on Kevin's future leadership drive, the wish to emulate the unworldly focus without the ruthlessness.

The influence of this was most evident in the second emergent theme, his approach to risk. He uses the containing structure of the public sector much as in the game of snakes and ladders, where one 'might need to go sideways', to get ahead. He was confident in taking 'calculated risks' rather than the 'dangerous risk' of his doppelgänger. Kevin was prepared to recalibrate himself to new circumstances, to adjust his language and approach to the 'different animals' he encountered, while the focus remained on *'the crown'*, of directorship. The idea of remaining in a *'comfort zone'* is seen as risky, but risk is to be taken in *'steady steps'*, even in *'a strange time',* one of turmoil in society, such as the miners' strike and austerity cuts.

In the striving for *'great things',* Kevin is also aware of other forces of play. The theme of luck intervening. The sense of something *'mystical'* in the synchronicity of events to unexpectedly provide opportunities that helped him up the ladder. The confidence taken from these strange experiences enabling him to think *'oh yeah I can do this'*, despite the echo that he was not one of the *'bright gifted people'*. He appeared to find comfort in being at the unexpected *'right place at the right time'*, accepting this as part of the game.

Summary and Discussion

Kevin has clearly had a distinguished career peppered with awards and positions of chair, influencing others at both local and government level. In addition, he had made the difficult transition to a corporate environment, thereby having an effect on future strategy in a different field. Yet there was something almost imperceptibly haunted about his polished presentation.

In the interview I sometimes found the broad smile a little overstretched, as if hiding some deep sadness. Perhaps this might simply hint of the sadness in remembering a career in past tense, after all as he put it,

> *'I don't want to be a hostage to carrying on working forever'.*

My experiences immediately after the interview suggested to me I might have carried something of him with me outside the walls of his close bond narrative. A deep wish to be in the darkness of nature, to sense something else other than the man-made highway. My euphoria perhaps a reflection of being free of the suffocating 'crown' which rather than being a glory, was always just out of reach, never quite enough.

The polished surface of Kevin's narrative was only disturbed by the reality of death, and I wondered was that what haunted him. His doppelgänger unnerving him because it represented a killed off part of himself. We often tend to think of the mystical as wholly positive and I thought at times were those *'opportunities'* granted by synchronicity simply a further distancing from his true self and unexplored potentiality. I was left wondering where the 'leader of the gang' had gone? Was Kevin's doppelgänger a reminder of the unheimlich aspect in himself, held hostage beneath the accolades.

<u>Appendix F</u>

Participant 3: 'Steve', Senior Civil Servant, DfT, (Male, Early 50's)

Biographical Data Chronology

1969   Steve born to Irish Catholic Family

1986   (17)   Split from Catholicism to become a born-again Christian

1989   (20)   Met future wife

1990   (21)   Began speaking in Protestant Church 'pseudo-leadership'

1990   (21)   Joined the Civil Service

1991   (22)   Married

1992   (23)   Birth 1st Child

1993   (24)   Birth 2nd Child

1995   (26)   First management role in The Department of Health and Social Care

1996   (27)   Moved to Ofsted (Analyst Statistician role)

2003   (34)   Took leadership position in church, responsible for 2 church's

2004   (35)   Introduced significant changes to Ofsted procedure

2006   (37)   Moved to Department of Transport (DfT)

2010   (41)   New 'Austerity' Government

2011   (42)   Moved to policy roles

2013   (44)   Team member severely ill with Parkinson's

2014   (45)   Experienced chest pains while in office

2015   (46)   Resigned leadership position in church

2016   (47)   New Government

2019   (50)   Left Civil Service, Head of Statistics

Biographical Data Chronology

Steve, the 3ʳᵈ participant was aged 51 at the time of the interview. As a senior analyst working within the civil service, he had what might be thought of as a very stable predictable career trajectory. One which would have traditionally seen the award of an OBE for services to the crown and a comfortable retirement. However, Steve's narrative focused on a singular life changing period of time, the advent of a new governmental approach. Through his narrative there emerged a process of making sense in a chaotic unknown, a seismic shift in his career and the consequences to his leadership thinking.

Adolescence and Early Adulthood

Steve outlined his early adulthood as a time of youthful competitive arrogance, '*without career plan*', being opportunistic and naturally taking a lead both at work and in the church. In addition to meeting his wife, he joined the civil service and had two children before he was 25. The creation of what he called a '*50s style household*', a very stable heimlich.

During this period Steve described developing a '*gut feel*' from seeing people he didn't want to be managed by, an awareness which wasn't '*evidence based*', but more a driving sense of what good leadership should be by its absence. This instinctive listening to '*murmurings*' was an '*unstructured listening*'. A seeing and listening that was somewhat in juxtaposition with the culture of the civil service and the analytic services in particular.

While his career trajectory was clearly mapped in his narrative detail, little was said regarding his adolescence or anything before. Except that at the age of 17 he announced to his parents that he was to convert to Protestantism, a move away from the family faith of Catholicism, which '*didn't land well*' with his parents. An act he felt echoed Martin Luther's rebellion. He also noted as a child he had a habit of stepping in to '*save people*' rather than taking care of himself.

Adulthood

For Steve up to his early 40's was a period of leadership success. He saw his ability to see things happen in the organisation '*before they happened*', as well as his calm focused '*spiritual attitude*' where things '*came to mind*', attributes from his church leadership providing a means of direction of travel in a bigger picture. He felt this could be called mystical and uncanny as he didn't know where this ability to predict things came from. Although he was clear mysticism was a term he would use within his church leadership. In fact, he felt his role within the church leadership was very much one of '*watch dog*' to defend against '*bizarre thinking*'.

As well as '*gut feels*', Steve also felt the serendipitous intervention of others, as well as timely '*luck*', giving him courage at moments of doubt and uncertainty. He felt this lead to a more 'human leadership' as opposed to what he viewed as 'psychopathic' traits he had observed in others, as well as a productive cross-fertilisation from both his work and church influences. This in enabled him to 'fight the good fight', culminating in the one thing he felt made a difference, attempting a radical change in Ofsted. However, this developing of new ways of looking at things, challenging '*processes and protocols*' he felt was considered by some as '*subversive*' and not without the risk of personal cost to his career.

Late Adulthood

The earlier period of leadership success for Steve came to an end with the advent of the Cameron government and the *'age of austerity'*. It was at this point, when the game of pretending the civil service was a hated entity, when in reality it was valued, came to an end. This was the point which Steve refers to as '*the turn*' of the organisation from love to hate. He felt this turn was an enacted by an 'odious horrible creature' referred to by others in the civil service as the 'bogeyman'. A terrifying individual who saw no value in them as individuals or their organisation.

This lead to a stripping away of self-worth which Steve experienced as a '*very sobering time*'. A period that led to his questioning his own faith and with no sense of validation, his developing a '*big smile*' identity within the organisation, hiding the feelings of '*meaningless*'. A period of soul-searching and agonising.

Em, and at the time pretending that everything was okay at work, sort of go in

with a big smile upon my face an', lead the troops an' do whatever.

An' in background be sitting there agonising over everything that I held dear

in my own life, an' trying to work out what on earth [awkward laugh]

I was as a person and how to make it work and what should I do and em.

Not easy territory..

Steve

He recalled knowing that the organisational changes weren't necessarily intended to be personal, but they were experienced as an attack on the person, the core of his identity.

The last straw came for Steve witnessing a colleague getting ill with Parkinson's, deteriorating as a human being before his eyes. Finding a way to enable the team to work around this, led to Steve being pushed to '*the edge*' until '*something snapped*' and as he put it, taking his mind into '*uncomfortable territory*'. A place where all knowing was gone, resulting in a sense of '*madness*'. This in turn led him to the realisation that the church was also happy for him to '*flog*' himself to '*death*'.

Em, so for me that was the personal thing in my leadership journey that

changed me more than anything else. Em, because it made me rethink who I

am as a person.

Em, where I get my value from. Em, whether I, whether achieving things at

work is important to me or not, em (4 Sec.).

So that was by far the defining moment in my life and my career actually em,

is that, was that one point in time, em. An' ever since then I've been far more

em, there's a, protective of people and also far more protective of me.

Steve

As a result of what he called a '*zero-based review*' of his self-identity, Steve decided to step down from his leadership within the church and had to consider the unthinkable, leaving the civil service. It was in recalling this point of near mental collapse and organisational chaos that Steve referred to a number of '*fortunate incidences, uncanny events*' he felt might be thought of as '*lucky coincidences*' or '*spiritually ordained*' dependent on how you look at things.

The first of these series of '*odd moments*' was when an email popped up '*out of nowhere*' regarding a pre-retirement course. His curiosity led him '*on a whim*' to responding by putting his '*hat in the ring*'. He completed the course but was still uncertain about such a seismic career change away from the '*unique*' system of the civil service. However, the thoughts '*niggling away*' at him, so he prepared his CV.

Subsequently, again out of nowhere, a colleague came rushing over to tell him about a job in a local authority, and the high salary they were offering. Steve feigned a nonchalant response, but decided to apply, based on the first uncanny incident, which he could not ignore.

Then having completed the first interview, although '*not feeling natural*' at the time, a third event happened, in which he felt the '*stars had aligned*'. Months in advance he had booked some leave while his boss was away. Which in his assessment was a '*complete fluke*', as it landed between the first and subsequent interviews, which he did not know of at the time when booking the leave. This had given him the time and space in order to prepare and as a result he was offered a high paid position. Then, after some agonising at home he took the '*bold step*' to leave the civil service for a very senior position in a Local Authority.

Steve felt that the serendipity of the sequence of unexpected events, where the intervention of others without '*pre-empting*', where things just seemed to '*fall into place*', nudged him and gave him courage. He also suggested that perhaps his being without '*a career plan*' led in some way to the emergence of the uncanny events. However, he also spoke of how as a result of his experiences, he got '*collywobbles*' at times, being in the unknown of the leadership space. As a result, he concluded that he was more human in the leadership role, with a vigilance to protect people and his self, as well as to drive the organisation forward.

Structure

Whilst Steve mentioned on several occasions that he had no career plan, this effectively was within an organisation and a particular area of expertise which was itself highly structured. This reflected the general feel of the interview, very cordial, precise, points laid out, words clarified and at times thoughts verging on theological reflection.

There was, however, an edge of emotion that surfaced in brief moments of silence, awkward laughs, sudden deep breaths, struggling to form sentences. There were other glimpses hidden in metaphors of depleted machinery such as '*exhausted memory banks*' and '*running on empty*'. All of which appeared to reveal the depth of how traumatic this period of chaotic unknown had been. Also being present with Steve in the interview setting seem to influence, tuning in and encourage curiosity to this underlying structural need to make sense of the uncanny, rooted in an echoing question, could it happen again?

Thematic Analysis

In some ways it might be difficult to identify 'themes' when the focus of the narrative was on a very specific event. However, the extreme nature of the organisational change heralded by a sudden change in governmental culture, a seismic shift from the way it had always been, 'the turn', as Steve called it, was a key theme of Freud's study of the uncanny. The sudden turn from the sense of heimlich, a place of work relied on, perhaps more then realised, for our self-worth such as with Steve, to one which becomes meaningless or in a way unheimlich and the cause of shocking revelation in the nature of our reality.

The Second theme, is that the shock caused by this revealing of a non self, lead to chaotic internal states, which needed somehow to be made sense of, to be organised into thought. This stripping away of unconsciously constructed reality was most profoundly evident in how Steve tried, at great cost to own self, not to reveal to the organisation the reality of his colleague's Parkinson's. 'It is a terrible, terrible disease', the illness not just the decline of a valuable team member, but a living embodiment of what it is to deteriorate as a human in the face of the bogeyman, the stripping way of the organisation, in the turn which the self is disassembled.

For Steve being in the civil service was an organisation which might be thought of as an insulated system and the church, whilst an institution some might see in decline, was based for him on a '*solid foundation*' of theological. However, both systems were suddenly less able to bear shocks from the outside and appeared to have made curious his thinking of other systems or at least create a need to see emergent patterns in a series of uncanny events to make sense of chaos.

The final theme that emerged was the sense that although Steve left leadership both in the church and in the civil service to '*save himself*', there was still a fear of returning to his experience of being without a known self, a dread of '*not wanting to go back there*'. This was evident in a sort of lingering vigilance for over investment of the self within the new organisation. Steve's sense of self was effectively invested in the church, state, and home, but overly so in the first two. Steve felt strongly that he would need to incorporate a guard against the unknown, the fear of the bogeyman, the emergence of the unheimlich organisation which devalued the human. The return of the bogeyman.

Summary and Discussion

Steve believed the source of his self-worth as a human was nullified overnight by '*the turn*' of his heimlich, the work organisation, from a place of love into hate. However, governments come and go and whilst the civil service is of a great longevity, why should this relatively short chaotic period have had such an impact personally on a senior leader's thinking? Could the narrative be equally understood as a reaction to the stress of rapidly downsizing in a period of austerity?

However there appears to have been a substantial cultural shift. The civil service suddenly seen as meaningless rather than an indispensable part in the organisation of government. This shift revealed a hidden aspect of what was thought of as a heimlich for the self, the very nature of what it is to be and how unconsciously we invest in it.

What perhaps marks it as an uncanny event is how everything looked the same, familiar, but suddenly was not the same, it is an unknown and unknowable. It had become revealing as to its true nature.

What appears then is a series of events that might simply be thought of as 'completely fluke' but appear to represent an organisation of containment for Steve. Were the incidents simply ordered retrospectively to give meaning to the challenging of what work means in relation to the self? Or did the chaos and soul searching as Steve suggests, invite synchronicity as a resolve to the uncanny?

Also were the random fortuitous timings made '*mystical*' having reached the other side of the liminal space, when work once more provided containment for the unbearable realities of being human. Alternatively, is it a loss of self while in contact with unknowing, which enables consideration of a greater organising force?

One thing that appears clear is Steve witnessed first-hand a time of a unprecedented cultural shift, impacting on how he saw his future leadership. Leaving him with a heightened sensitivity to what it is to be a human at work. Also, what the uncanny work might reveal about the true nature of self. There was a sense of meeting his doppelganger in seeing his college with Parkinson's, which could not be readily suppressed.

Steve spoke of how looking back on his career, it all seemed '*like dust*'. A sentiment of depression perhaps or alternatively an exposed view as to the reality of work. Steve ultimately appeared to conclude that although he may have to subvert some of his true nature, to be an '*ambivert*' at work, he is also very aware of the dangers when the self is over invested in the organisation, a recognition of the unheimlich within the heimlich.

<u>Appendix G</u>

Participant 4: 'Trevor' CEO Global Engineering Consultancy (Male 50's)

Biographical Data Chronology

1966   Trevor born

1977   (11)   Scout trip to Airport

1980   Father's organisation relocated

1986 – 1988   HND in Civil Engineering

1991 – 1994   Sponsored Degree in Civil Engineering (1st Class)

2018   Honorary Doctorate of Engineering.

Biographical Data Chronology

Trevor, the fourth participant, Trevor, at 54 was the youngest. Having struggled in his earlier life academically, feeling he was more a 'people's person', his contribution to industry later earned him an Honorary Doctorate in the field of engineering. From his narrative there were a number of key phases identified in his life:

Childhood

From early on Trevor found academic work difficult, being compared to his elder sister and younger brother who often got straight A's. In fact, his father's comment *'hard work never killed anybody'* was something that puzzled him, when taken literally work could kill you. This may have reflected the reality of living in an area of mining and heavy industry, Trevor seeing what it actually did to people.

Indeed, Trevor experienced *'uncomfortable'* conversations with his friends when a factory, in which his father was a manager, closed. While his father commuted to a different location, the labour force was made redundant. His classmates felt he was 'silver spooned', and while not the case, this left a deep impression on him. During this period his uncle who worked in the mines was also laid off and the impact of redundancy on his hometown was something he carried into adulthood.

A day trip with the scouts to see how an airport worked was the spark for Trevor, he wanted to be an individual in charge of *'major projects'*, infrastructure that made a difference. This then influenced his move into Engineering.

Early Adulthood

Early in Trevor's adulthood, having completed an engineering HND and worked on site for a few years, the company he worked for saw his *'potential'* and sponsored him through university. He saw this as a good fit for his *'practical mind'*, with his philosophy,

'you only get out what you put in'.

It was during this period Trevor realised he had *'an instinct'* for leadership, that his *'gift'* was managing people, relating to labour and professionals alike. He felt he had the *'curiosity to learn',* to get to the core of a problem and logically come up with an action plan.

Adulthood:

As Trevor's career developed from leading teams, to directorship and ultimately the role of CEO, the thread that ran through his career was his sense that business was in his *'emotional DNA'.* Like his father, he felt *'hard work'* and the ability to remain positive even if internally the *'world is falling down'* was a *'light'* to others that led to positive outcomes.

Indeed, he strongly felt that in the face of failure you had to,

> *'dust yourself down and move on to the next thing'*

while avoiding *'too much depth'* in regard to thinking about the emotional response. For Trevor, the choosing of a good team of professionals and seeing the '*silver lining'* in a bad situation, were key to *'holding things together'* and survival in times of turbulent change. Emotional outbursts being of no value to the logic of business.

Thematic Analysis:

Whilst there was no actual mention of either the uncanny or mystical in Trevor's narrative, the theme of business as *'emotional DNA'* and the use of *'unravelling'* emerged as something which might prove useful to the research.

For Trevor, people were seen as the 'assets' of the organisation and his belief that the logic of business as fundamental to his being, influenced him in making difficult decisions. This ability to get *'under the skin'* of emotional responses during turbulent situations such as periods of recession, as well as mergers and acquisitions, was something he felt enabled him to lead others and the organisation. The paradox was that in order to be a *'light'* for others, the face of confidence he projected may need to hide the personal effects of a *'world falling down'.*

Indeed, paradox seems evident in the way he used *'unravelling'*. Others are seen to unravel with an emotional response to bad situations. However, Trevor's approach was to *'unravel the noise'* of such emotion in a truly 'Taylorist' manner. By breaking the situation down into *'manageable chunks'* that report the logical truth of the matter, it could be determined how the parts of the situation function and who gains from that configuration. For Trevor the solution to a problem, the course of action to be taken, was only gained by the logical unravelling to the level of component parts.

Case Structure

Trevor's narrative presented itself as a solid edifice of logical progression. Work put in and success as the product coming out. There was little if any room for doubt or unknowing. Examples were readily given to confirm the logical reasoning of any situation or inquiry. Yet there was one moment, just before the interview started, that hinted at something beyond the presentation of well-polished organisational values.

As Trevor adjusted himself in his chair, I explained the reason for having two recording devices was to mitigate the risk of *'losing it all'*. His response, completely unguarded, was to say with a laugh, *'it would be funny if they said something different for each other'*. Then, with time pressing, and the need to get on, I pressed the record button. It was the only thing that came close to acknowledging something that could be uncanny or mystical, not explainable or reduced by logic.

Summary and discussion

Trevor had a very imposing presence in the interview space. It was more than his tall athletic build, exuding confidence, one was left with no doubt as to who commanded the relationship. Also, his arriving 10 minutes late and his PA knocking on the door two minutes before the end, emphasised the corporate choreography, his status and stature, the CEO with little time to spare.

This then really begs the question, why take the interview? Indeed, in the second session Trevor seemed genuinely frustrated with the focus on points he felt he had sufficiently covered. Yet the unique value of the interview appears to be the belief in and the presentation of pure logic.

In terms of an index of uncanny and mystical content, if one were to put a numerical value to such, Trevor might perhaps represent a baseline close to zero. However, the brief exchange before recording started suggested that even in such an enclosed impenetrable logic, an alternative existed in the mind.

'it would be funny if they said something different for each other'

I never once felt that his philosophy, that business was his *'emotional DNA',* was false. It was his genuine belief. In his eyes anything else was histrionics, emotional noise. Yet I was left feeling that his humorous observation at the periphery of the interview pointed to something beyond emotion or logic, something in his thinking unlikely to see the light of day, particularly in such a corporate container.

<u>Appendix H</u>

Participant 5: 'Brian' CEO Artificial Intelligence Organisation (Male 60's)

Biographical Data Chronology

1959   Brian born

1965   Visited child psychologist

(?)   Attended London Public School early 70's

(?)   Read physics at, Oxford

(?)   Dropped out of heli-ski group were 4 people died

1979 (20)   Formed a 'start-up' organisation with three others.

(?)   Partnered with a founding member and moved to USA

(?)   In USA partner died of cancer

(?)   1st Marriage broke up

(?)   Did various senior consultancy, start-ups, and interim management roles

(?)   Took Sabbatical due to 3rd child being born prematurely

(?)   Consider retraining as psychotherapist

2006   Received call out of blue from 'The Organisation'

(?)   Took 1-year consultancy role with the 'innovation' side of the organisation

2007   Took permanent role & grew division from 200 to 1300 people

2012   Left to be CTO of new division in the organisation

(?)   Offered 'significant carrot' to do initiative outside the organisation

2018   Handed over 'core tech side' in reorganisation of the organisation

Biographical Data Chronology

The fifth participant, Brian, at 61 was the oldest and the most private. I had no idea who I was meeting until shortly before the interview, except I was informed by an intermediary that he was at the cutting edge in Artificial Intelligence and Robotics. From his narrative there were a number of key phases identified in his life:

Early childhood

Early childhood for Brian appears to have been a period where he felt himself to be a '*braided*' member of the family someone connected but at the edge. His place amongst his siblings is never confirmed except to say his brothers and sisters found his insistent curious nature difficult to contain,

> '*we're not taking Brian to the cinema, because he just spends the whole-time asking questions and not watching the film*'.

Brian described his great curiosity as a need to take things apart in order to understand them, choosing car maintenance manuals over the stories the other children read, such as 'the Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe'.

Yet clearly there were other underlying formative issues, some of which emerged in the second session.

> *but I was, I was very, very overweight as a child and I think em, that kind of dealing with that, and dealing with, you know, people, [*] you know, ah, making fun of you and em, not fitting in.*

> *You know, I think once again, I think that was probably the start of me getting comfortable with being an outlier, so to speak.*

> Brian

At some point his parents took him to see a child psychologist and considering how mental health has become less stigmatised in recent years, to do so in the early 1960s would suggest a degree of parental concern. As Brian put it from his present perspective, '*I think I did go and*

see a child, a, a child psychologist at one stage, em.' While put across in the narrative as if it were a decision of self-reliance, the hesitancy and tone suggested a possible need to distance himself from buried anxieties.

What seemed clear to Brian now, was that as early as five or six he rejected his parents religious views, making his own atheist status clear. Yet Brian's obvious intelligence and self-reliance may have also been a means of mastery of the unknown source of his feelings. He saw himself as on the edge without kindred spirit in a family of artistic types.

> *I used to always complain, you know, why are there no scientists in this family,*
> *you know, who are kindred spirits.*

> Brain

His intense curiosity seemed to be aimed at understanding his world at a deep level, as if to understand the origins of himself, in the role of outsider, perhaps a deep desire to find a sense of heimlich in what was experienced as the edge of unheimlich.

Adolescence and Early Adulthood

Brian would appear to have found a heimlich in the institutions of education, pursuing his 'taking things apart' through a degree in physics. Yet there were still struggles with his identity and sense of feeling uncanny in himself and the institution of academia.

> *Feeling like I had quite a different view about what it was, you know, to be a*
> *young man than other people did, you know, in terms of values, in terms of,*
> *you know, what I thought, you know, what I aspired to be...*

> *... I think that was another area where I probably felt I didn't fit in, I didn't, you*
> *know, a kind of laddish, kind of culture just didn't, didn't do it for me at all.*
> *You know, I didn't want to be part of that.*

> Brian

However even whilst at Oxford he was pursuing interests outside academia, his real love being that of computers. Indeed, when he decided to leave, rather than fulfilling the expectation that he should be a physics researcher PhD, he recalls the tutor in a mocking tone, one of surprise and indignation, '*going into industry, surely not*'.

This was clearly something which made no sense on paper, certainly as far as the University was concerned. However, it was perhaps a sign of growing confidence and trust on Brian's part in his intuition, in the force of attraction, the belief in serendipity and his growing love of a new technology. A confidence in his alternative view of how the universe works.

Yet there is a determination to remain independent of the binary sides he seems to have been struggling with.

> *I think it is just about, tru', it's about, (4 sec.)*
>
> *It's about the, it's about the weird coincidences. It's about the serendipity. It's about, it's almost about the idea…*
>
> *I think I said earlier, maybe it's just useful as a frame of reference.*
>
> *So, you know, do I believe in some kind of collective unconsciousness? Emm, I don't think I probably do. But I, I just kind of maybe I think, I find it's a useful way to operate, is to sort of, em, is to trust in the fact that extraordinary kind of seren' serendipitous connections, you know, get made.*
>
> Brian

It's interesting to note the degree of uncertainty, the struggle not to take sides in the phrase '*I don't think I probably do',* that there might be something beyond serendipity, residing at an unconscious collective level.

There was also a sense of omnipotence, a knowing he couldn't work for someone else Brian needed to work for a greater goal that of advancing science, towards an ideal. After a brief

consultancy role, he ventured in as a start-up organisation at the age of 20. The energy in his recalling of this period was palpable in the narrative. The creative partnering with a small, family size group, untethered by convention, appeared to coincide with the conception of a new paradigm at the cutting age of programming. The birth of a new technology.

Brian stressed how he was not tied by role. Dealing one moment with the establishment mafia, the next packing discs into boxes and moving desks. Moving desks whilst being CEO was viewed as an important metaphor for not being limited to any identity or class, a sense of total freedom. Even as he recalled the start-up venture and how '*it grew like mad*', I found myself as an observer being swept along with the magnitude of it all, like Alice in Wonderland tumbling into a creative fantastical world, hard for the mind to comprehend.

But then, narrated in a nonchalant manner, the cracks started to appear. The group of four founding members split into two. Brian left for America with a partner who later died of cancer. There was the breakup of his first marriage, then therapy and as Brian put it succinctly, '*a lot of things happened*'. All of which he felt were a '*very informative experience*' in his leadership development.

However, Brian then posed the question, as if addressing someone in the future.

> *... if you ask the question, well, what's a good reason to therapy? My answer would be, it's not that you have to feel things or you're in crisis or terrible, actually, you just have to have the idea that they could be better. You know, and, and I think, em, [*] you know, I, I found it fascinating. And maybe one day, I'll go and do some more.*

<div align="right">Brian</div>

This suggested to me a distancing from a period of chaos and devastation. In Brian's narrative he then spoke in a very report fashion regarding several senior level jobs he did, but finished by saying,

> *I think I was a bit burnt out from the private sector.*

It was said in a quiet voice, almost as if not to disturb a ghost from the past. He also described the effects of such intense liberation from organisational constraints.

> I *think the experience of that start-up I talked about, you know, it's a bit like, a moth flying too close to the flame. It's so overwhelming. It's so intense. It's so takes over your life. It's, it's very difficult after that, you know, you almost become unemployable. Because, because you're so em,*
>
> *[*] You've had complete freedom, you've had, been able to set the culture, hire the people you want, set the mission, you know. It's after that, working for somebody else, you know, and I that's why I never expected that I would stay at 'The Organisation'.*

Brian

Adulthood

From that small but poignant comment regarding 'complete freedom', there was a large leap in the chronology of the narrative, as if distance were needed. Aged 47, he was clearly busy and in demand when he received a call out of the blue. A call he initially was not interested in because of the sector and that the caller initially refusing to say who they represented. In that spirit and to maintain anonymity, it is only ever referred to in his narrative as 'The Organisation'.

There was a sense that Brian had been wandering from job to job, a little lost. As if searching for an heimlich which was more inclusive of alternative frames of reference, supporting 'negative capability' within a role.

But what followed in the narrative had the feeling of remembering a courtship between an organisation and an individual. The narrative was close and intimate and I felt in the moment as if I were listening in to the call. As Brian put it,

…was blown away by what I saw there. That was the start of a love affair, basically, that has endured for 14 years.

Whilst initially signing up to a year's consultancy contract, Brian seemed to find kindred spirits.

...the culture, the people, the crazy, the crazy kind of technology mix that was there, the vision of the business.

This was enough for him to trust his intuition and '*take a leap*' becoming a permanent member. As he told his story there was a marked tone of reverence, in a way he had found his heimlich. A place within an innovation organisation, where his role was to be

...a piece of disruptive grit in a disruptive oyster.

The organisation had in effect created a role around him. Putting his curiosity and creativity to work, where his role was to find the creative edge of the unheimlich.

Late career

Perhaps in keeping with the participant's life stage at the age of 61, as well as purchasing a cottage in the country, was his thinking on how to pass something of his experiences on to the next generation. Although he speaks of innovation as a cauldron of messy ingredients, a bit like a recipe, but one of infinite variety, he also outlines the one area which might be passed on is how to be more comfortable with uncertainty.

It's actually the younger people who struggle most with uncertainty and one of the things that we find we have to do with young people out of university, is get them comfortable with uncertainty…

...coach them on the fact that, it does look a bit crazy and, and I know you want answers to these questions, but you know what, we can't give you answers to these questions. Because that's part and parcel of being a disrupter, you, we are going into uncharted territory, there is no map. Okay? Get used to it, no map, okay.

...you're going to have to trust your intuition, you're going to have to em, [*] deal with the fact that feels very messy. But guess what, out of that, cauldron of craziness, exciting things will come.

Em, but em, you're gonna have to learn to tolerate it. And, and part of my job, as your manager, leader or whatever, is to try and help you reframe that uncertainty into a feeling of excitement. You know, and to create the psychological safety net around it.

Brian

Thematic Analysis

In Brian's narrative an emerging theme appeared to be an insistent drive within for an alternative guiding frame of reference other than that offered by the social and group norms. From the earliest age there was a sense of searching beyond what was considered '*popular*', and a non-acceptance to take the story given on face value. There appeared to be a deep need to find a heimlich for his insistent curiosity as a means to understand the forces unseen, that might yield the origins of his intuition, aided in serendipity. Whilst viewed from the perspective of a 61-year-old, the participant saw himself as an '*intrepid explorer*' someone prepared to look over the cliff edge, at the very edge of his anchorage to something solid. A troublemaker within the organisation that acts, as he put it, as a

...structural inoculation against the antibodies within the mothership.

As an observer to the heady mix, there was a feeling of deliriously being swept away in the love affair narrative. However, embedded amongst the story and not easy to detect at first, appeared to be an undercurrent, a warning. The role of taking leaps, trusting intuition, inviting the forces of attraction and serendipity to guide one's view of the universe, to be the disruptive grit within an oyster, has a price. As with the oysters in Alice in Wonderland they were eaten up. It is from this narrative another theme emerged, that of loneliness and the risk of madness

being at the edge. Also, the question, is the madness and loneliness a result of the uncanny and mystical or are they the alternative frame of reference to contain those fears?

What appears to be a central theme for the participant is circumnavigating the linear, a continual breaking down of elements in a way as to reach a quantum like 'fuzzy state'. Where everything is possible and something extraordinary potentially appears. Whether that be through physics, computing, the use of metaphor and allegory as well as putting crazy ideas of people together in a cauldron like way. Or even by the taking of a boundaryless role in how he holds the organisation in mind, not wishing to be a member of a club that would accept him.

The most difficult theme, like a water margin throughout the narrative, is that of death. Death in the reality of the participant's biography, the impact of the skiers' deaths in early adult hood, the death of a partner, a founding member of the original start-up and the death of a marriage. All of which, although dramatic, are glossed over except to say serendipity intervened and intuition enabled critical decision, perhaps life-saving ones.

Yet there seems to be another form of death, which is most difficult for the intrepid explorer, the death of the quantum state, the white heat in forming of an organisation, the disruptive grit that is reduced and disregarded when the mothership accepts the idea. There is then a critical period of mourning appears to be not so much located in relationship break up, but in the death of idea formation. The moment an organisation is born, the moment the nonlinear state is lost, and there is an almost melancholic collapse for the participant.

How then does the participant cope with the emergence of a new organisation in the mind, once the chaotic state is at an end. When for Brian things grow like mad, there is an immense energy and innovation, influenced, if not led by the trust in intuition and serendipity. However, as he stated he becomes unemployable having experienced such 'wonderous freedom'. A state of euphoria or loosening of consciousness, a 'petite mort', before ultimately being consumed, as the curious oysters were by the organisation in Alice in Wonderland, a return to the dominant the binary establishment.

Case Structure

There is something of the quantum process in the structure of the narrative. Opening with, *'the answer to this question has no sharp edge'*, Brian then proceeds to give a measured comparison with the development of leadership and the acquired skills from parenting, using the metaphor of a recipe, where suitable experiences and inspirations are selected in a process of adaptation and selection.

What follows, to use his analogy is an *'impedance mismatch'* with the organisation in response to his curiosity was met by others leading to his braided position. His response is to outline a mystical frame of reference, a trust and intuition and serendipity of forces unseen, as a new way of understanding the universe.

With this understanding he abandons the ties to the status quo in favour of the start-up narrative, where things '*grow like mad*'. A quantum fuzzy state is reached where anything can happen, and a non-binary state is achieved. However, very brief report like narrative suggest things collapse, not a new steady state, but one of chaos both internally and externally.

> *And em, (2 sec.) anyway, that kind of came to an end, partly because two, two of the founders, we, two of us felt we should move it to America, two of them, ah, wanted to keep it in the UK. The two of us who wanted to move it to America left. We did another start-up. Unfortunately, he then got cancer, he died. My first marriage broke up, lots of things happened. I, I (2 sec.) went into therapy. Actually, I went back into therapy. I'd done some therapy earlier.*

> Brian

However, this is quickly brought back in the narrative to be a formative experience with therapy as something fascinating which he may do more often in the future. The narrator feels calmed stabilised and in readiness for the next key serendipitous event, the call.

The pace once more quickens, leaps of faith are made based on his internal frame of reference and he is once more in a fuzzy state, a world with a crazy mix of people, culture, and technology. The difference being in this case that the centre appears to hold. Whilst he may be

the curious disruptive grit within a disruptive oyster, he is also a permanent member within an organisation. His unheimlich finding a heimlich.

But there was a juxtaposition in the structure of certainty and uncertainty, of stability and chaos. This is particularly evident in the phrase *'seemingly affable'*.

> *Em, [*] that doesn't mean to say, I don't think that there are some, are some very strange, serendipitous, things at play, you know.*

> *It sounds sort of seemingly affable, and maybe it's just a frame of reference. Maybe it's just a convenient way of understanding, you know, ah, things that, ah, anyway. So, I'm going to try and stay on the beaten track.*

As if his frame of reference, his heimlich, may be unheimlich at times, which isn't as affable as in the telling.

Only after describing the love affair following *'the call'* did the narrative return to a constant stable state, where he was able to describe his philosophy, how to tune in to, train and learn from unseen forces in a measured manner. This process narrated by blending metaphors in order to relay the liminal space, the mess versus order, from a point of psychological safety. Interestingly this enabled him to voice a personal revelation that emerged between the first and second sessions. The realisation his difficult earlier experiences, 'being an outlier' had been compensated, paid off in his current role as the 'grit in the oyster'.

Summary and discussion

There was a sense that the participant encountered the uncanny at a very early stage, feeling that where he was meant to be at heimlich within the family, was experienced as unheimlich. He was a 'braided' member. A member close to the edge of not being a member.

In a way it would be a temptation to side with the research kickstart panel, who felt the origin, or an influencing component of future potential paths, emerged from an early mental health issue. One that required a visit to the child psychologist. As if the greater social system felt he just didn't get the idea of the family trip to the cinema, was to be a group immersed in the

projected story. His atomising curiosity to be pathologized as a troublesome trait in his development.

Yet, could it not simply be what Brian refers to as an '*impedance mismatch*', his energy misread as a precocious problem child, not willing to sit still. While there may be no way of knowing the perhaps traumatic origins at the root of the participant's early behaviour, it is what he appears to represent in the family and later organisational structures, the roles he occupies that which are pertinent. Is it the impact of encountering the uncanny in his psychosocial situation of heimlich that in turn leads to the formation of a trust in guiding unseen forces, the influence of intuition and serendipity?

What seems evident is an early valency to deconstruct the psychosocial structures given, to circumnavigate excepted understanding. However, this would appear to result in a difficult internal state, how do you trust the organisation-in-the-mind, if you experience the idea of organisation as something to be mistrusted, something to be got around. The result being something of a paradox more akin to a quantum state organisation, an organisation that exists and does not exist at the same time. The ability to hold conflicting states of mind, awaiting an alternative to emerge.

In Brian's narrative setting the scene of his role as leading an '*intrepid band of explorers*' climbing the cliff face while the organisation sits by the certainty of the campfire, the very image of heimlich.

> *You're climbing the rock face. And the last anchor point is about, you know, is, I don't know, 100 foot below you. And in this analogy, that anchor point represents, if you like, what the organisation think you're doing, okay? So that's what you've been, that's what people think you're doing, but you're well past that. So, if you fall, you're gonna fall quite far. Okay.*
>
> *Em, am I worried, I'll come back to that in a second, am I worried about falling?* **No**. *Ah, but that, that's where the analogy doesn't quite work.*
> *Em, an' every, there's a group of people down at the bottom of the rock face who are making a campfire. And that kind of represents the current organisational priorities if you like. And every now and then they look up and they shout, 'hey', you know, both to me and the other crazy people who are on*

this rock face with me? 'Why don't you come down and help make the campfire?'

*And, and my view is **no**, I'm not going to for several reasons. Firstly, there's quite enough of you down there building the campfire. And, you know, I don't, you don't need my help. Secondly, if I don't get to the top of the cliff, if I and my intrepid band of explorers don't get to the top of the cliff face and look over, quite frankly and see what's coming, next.*

The campfire might be the least of our problems. Okay.

Brian

Taking risks, playing '*well beyond*' the anchor point of knowing, where the organisation has sanctioned his role, has real consequences. In his analogy a metaphorical death, perhaps suggesting a falling into madness. However, this analogy becomes itself uncanny when in the second session Brian's recalls narrowly avoiding death on a skiing slope, where the group are not meant to be. Brian being saved by serendipity and gestation of troubling thoughts.

In effect there is a constant tension between the containing organisation's need for stability and how Brian sees his role, to be an inoculation against the idea of heimlich, to be in the unknown, where the unthinkable is not off limits. His identity in a way is invested in uncertainty as to where truth lies, to being in the unheimlich.

One interesting way Brian tries to maintain this 'well beyond' fuzzy state within the narrative is the use of analogy, almost as a means of what I thought of as 'structural fracking', is playing with non-binary images to bypass the surface structures in order to release something deeper. To reach hard to access thinking beneath organisational structures, to 'tune in', not without risk, to alternative perceptions. An uncanny experience Brian describes as being akin to pre déjà vu.

<u>Appendix I</u>

Participant 6: 'Cathy' Director 'Mind Training' Organisation (Female 50's)

Biographical Data Chronology

1964   Cathy born

1982   Attended University of Edinburgh

1984   (20)   While at University diagnosed with Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma

1984   The night before chemotherapy, specialists could not see anything on biopsies

1988   (24)   While on a long-haul flight mentally conversed with her grandmother

1988   Grandmother had died unexpectedly during the time of the flight

1989   (25)   Started practising Buddhism

1991   (27)   Became youngest director of multinational investment bank

1996   (32)   Retired from the banking

1996   Set up a non-profit retreat centre

2003   (39)   Birth of daughter

2009   (45)   Started an organisation to introduce 'mind training' into the corporate world

2017   (53)   Started divorce proceedings after husband cut his hand off

2018   (54)   Became interested in 'active breath work' and silent retreats

Biographical Data Chronology

At 55, the sixth participant, Cathy, was the managing director of her own company, having once occupied roles at the very highest levels of investment banking. From her narrative several key life phases were identified:

The End of Adolescence

One of the most striking aspects of Cathy's narrative is the absence of any reference to her childhood or early development. Her story begins at the age of 20, the end of her adolescence, receiving what she refers to as, *'pretty much a death sentence'* being diagnosed with non-Hodgkin lymphoma. Also, the hypothesising of the research kickstart panel suggested that perhaps on a wider social context there may have been a high level of expectation in attending a prestigious university, with a well mapped out of future, perhaps far from her family.

Yet suddenly Cathy was unnaturally faced with her mortality. Specialist second opinion confirmed the initial biopsy results and chemotherapy was arranged. Then, in what Cathy refers to as simply *'very good fortune'* in having *'some kind of experience'*, the night before chemotherapy was due to start, specialists no longer saw anything, she didn't have the illness anymore.

This revelation for me as a researcher was shocking, but there seemed to be no obvious change to the participant's career trajectory towards becoming an investment analyst, save to say she felt the *'good fortune'* brought the realisation she didn't want to regret her life. Also it brought a desire to find a '*more effective way'* of leading herself, as well as the need to fully *'unlock potential'* in her life.

Perhaps such a traumatic event could only be faced with a stoic response, to carry on as planned. Yet in my reflections of the interview, I experienced a pang of sadness of something lost rather than gained.

Young Adulthood

A few years later, at the age of 24, whilst on a long-haul flight, Cathy had an 'in my head' conversation with her 76-year-old grandmother. While Cathy protested, *'you can't leave me'* her grandmother told her she wanted to die.

As it transpired her grandmother had actually died around that time. The impact in the tone of the narration was one of bewilderment. A deep spiritual connection with her grandmother was truncated in a way that left Cathy searching for,

> *'people who had that sense there was something more'.*

This yearning for *'something bigger'* led to Buddhism which she felt enabled her by,

> *...not focusing on the things that you can see or measure. Em, but moving beyond the sort of the, the, the, you know, the material to the, to where the true intelligence lies.*

> *... playing in the quantum field.*

For Cathy this *'sensing into'* something was a bodily ability to sense into *'weak signals'* which in turn meant she could use these *'gut feels'* to give good investment advice, making predications.

> *'what wanted to present within the market, what was around the corner'*

She put this ability down to the directing influence of *'coincidence'*, and how she had trained her brain, understanding both micro and macro in order to reach a third non-binary state of mind.

However, she followed her narrative on coincidence with the comment, '*if you believe in those things'* a wish perhaps to acknowledge alternative forces other than the binary nature of numbers, but paradoxically at the same time maintain a distance which enabled her to pursue her career in investment banking, a world established on numbers.

This was followed by a report style narrative of her many accomplishments, including her coming to be the youngest director at age 27, with a meteoric rise to positions of responsibility for billions worth of assets. The question emerging in myself was how are abilities bordering on uncanny or mystical kept in mind, in an organisational world so intensely focused on the binary of profit and loss?

Adulthood

Then, in what seemed a jarring moment in the flow of narrative, relaying nonchalantly how at 32 she decided to retire from banking. Followed by the setting up of a non-profit retreat centre. The manner of her telling was polished, confident, just another strategic decision. Yet my internal experience was of a collapse, a forced exodus from the corporate organisation in the mind, counter to the prevailing financial economy boom period. It felt as if the forming of a retreat, might be to make sense and provide space for self-development that might not have been achieved within the corporate world.

It would be 13 years before her return to engage directly with the corporate sector, again precipitated by an event of 'coincidence'.

Later Adulthood

Having further developed her skills, the ability to stay with the non-binary close to a portal of *'greater intelligence'*, as well as packaging this as *'playing in the quantum field'*, Cathy starts an organisation which is a pioneer in *'mind training'*. Then taking it directly into the corporate world.

Yet there seemed clearly chaos present in her life, such as in the madness of her husband who cut his hand off in a moment of psychosis. This is viewed by Cathy as a difficult shedding of skin which she had been preparing for, ultimately leading to divorce.

> *I felt a strong sense that I wanted to kind of like, I kept saying, I want to shed*
> *a skin, and em there's another iteration of myself that wants to come and I want*

to kind of live, not the sort of binary, you know, sort of grasping and aversion.
But, you know, being able to hold, (2 sec.) em, the paradox.

Cathy

Case Structure

One of the difficulties in understanding the underlying structure, the effects, or origins of uncanny and mystical in the participant's narrative, was that there was a high degree of well-worn polished presentation. The initial question was responded to within 10 minutes and even after gently repeating same question with emphasis on 'personal', it was in her words *'all done'* within 18 minutes. The effect of such a polished surface was that although she spoke of listening at 'the portal', my sense was of being removed from the feel of it. Only recalling the death of her grandmother and her husband cutting his hand off, momentarily hinted at the turmoil beneath the surface.

Then perhaps in a moment of coincidence, at the end of the interview, when one recording device had been turned off, the backup device remained on. We spoke for a further six minutes, but it was much more of a free-flowing narrative, outside the constraints of the perceived interview frame. In that short time, she revealed some of the tensions between holding alternative views, which she was happy to include in the gestalt of the interview.

Thematic Analysis

Of the many themes that emerged in the participant narrative, the additional six minutes revealed the significant theme of language and gender, and how the uncanny and mystical might be thought of by organisations.

Such phrases as '*play in the quantum field*' and '*staying with the paradox*' to unlock untapped potential, were deliberate choices. Also, the metaphors used such as '*getting the troops ready*' to '*sense into it*' preparing for a presenting but unrealised future, were means to relate well to the prevailing male corporate culture. Whereas Cathy indicated that words like uncanny, mystical, miraculous or intuition, would be thought of as female attributes and not be well

received. In a way quantum physics was something unseen which science has a degree of mastery over, with some useful potential to unlock.

So, there was a translation of words, a filtering before the concepts of uncanny and mystical could be considered acceptable in the corporate world. Yet within the participant it was clear, the uncanny was a non-binary state of mind akin to reverie, an *'un-cognitive sensing'*, from which better decisions might emerge in the form of images or signals, that need to be voiced.

However, another theme is raised by this 'sensing' was its position before thinking, in a place that makes no sense in a binary frame of reference. What appears to open the participant up to this uncanny and mystical position was what she called *'post-traumatic growth'*. Her metaphor to try and encapsulate this was of steel being made strong by *'tempering'*. For Cathy the tempering seems to come from coincidence following traumatic shocks, resulting in a better state, an 'anti-fragile state'.

Summary and discussion

Throughout the narrative I often thought that this temporary access to a new level of awareness appears to come after intense periods of grief. The traumatic diagnosis of cancer, the death of her spiritually significant grandmother, the ending of a high-flying career and the traumatic ending of her marriage, perhaps somewhat at odds with her internal *'un-cognitive sensing'*.

This also left me pondering, was the uncanny and mystical an encounter, a coincidence, that enabled access to a greater whole than that provided by the organisation? Alternatively, was the uncanny and mystical a response to the failure of the organisational container, the specialists, the doctors, the analysts, the collapse of the organisation in the mind leading to a need for something bigger.

It was hard to imagine for a moment the bodily symptoms and the need to understand their significance felt by the participant at the age of 20 or to the internal state of mind resulting from having witnessed the mindlessness of her husband's severed hand. Was it perhaps at these times, that no-sense perspectives provide a sense making alternative, something that might be referred to as uncanny or mystical?

Appendix J

Participant 7: 'Peter', Wealth Management, Private Bank, Principal, (Male, Late 50's)

Biographical Data Chronology

1961   Peter born

1968 – 1975   Lived in inner-city Victorian tenement building

1968 – 1975   (?)   Hospitalised as result of fight with skinheads

1975   (14)   Grandfather died

1975   (14)   Family moved out of inner-city to coastal county

1975 – 1977   Attended Independent Boarding School, as a 'Day Boy'

1977 – 1978   Attended Grammar School, Sixth Form

1978 – 1979   (?)   Started practicing meditation

1979   Start of Thatcher Government

1979 – 1981   (19-20) Police Force (Inner-city)

1981 – 1984   (20-23) Degree course in humanities (Polytechnic)

1991 – 1993   City based investments company

1993   (32)   Purchased country estate

1993   Local Authority announce plans for dual carriageway nearby

1993   While on holiday, home burgled

1993   (32)   Joined a top UK private wealth management bank

1994   (?)   Had brief Gestalt Therapy

2019   (58)   Started leaving period as Principal of wealth management bank

Biographical Data Chronology

Peter was one of two participants who were initially quite tentative in committing to an interview, yet at just under 4 hours it was also the longest interview of all the participants. As the 7th participant, Peter was aged 59 and midway through a leaving process as Principal in a private wealth management bank, having worked at a high level in a competitive environment for many years. During the interview a number of key phases emerged within his narrative.

Childhood

Peter began his narration by speaking of his childhood, with what was for him a very clear tenant, 'I never want to be in my parents position, ever'. Peter lived with his parents, brother, and sister in a Victorian tenement, occupied by five families all sharing one bathroom. They lived what he referred to as a 'week to week existence'. The issue of hunger was ever present, often with 'bread and sugar' constituting a meal. The constant hunger led to fighting at school, with Peter on occasion offering protection or bullying others for food.

Yet despite these terrible conditions, Peter thought fondly of home. A place where there were mushrooms under the bed and a strange individual occupying the top floor, who wore a caftan, long hair, and dark glasses. A strange other he was in awe of.

However, as well as the physical deprivation, he also felt *'squashed'* at school by the stigma of poverty and the constant need to fight leaving him branded as a *'thicko'*. He recalled one of his earliest memories wishing for *'choices and personal freedom'* and that the *'worst thing of all'* was being told what he could and couldn't do, resulting in his *'fragrant disregard for authority'*.

Adolescence

There came a pivotal moment in Peter's adolescence. An event occurred which he felt to be the *'uncanny'* intervention of luck and fortune. His grandfather died and as a result of an insurance policy, his grandmother was left well provided for. She then put all of this money towards relocating them as a family to a new home, as well as sending Peter to an independent boarding school. This school was described as having a *'family atmosphere'*, but also as being *'semi*

derelict' and *'shambolic'*. Yet for Peter this was *'an absolute lifesaver'* and whilst as a *'day boy'* he still got into fights occasionally with *'the boarders'*, he academically managed to catch up. Another *'fortunate thing'* as he put it, was he couldn't get a job quickly, which resulted in his attending six form. Something he felt he *'owed'* to his grandmother, *'to do something'* big with his life. This was for Peter a *'quantum leap'* where he started *'taking it seriously'*, directing his energy from fighting, *'a bit of a thing then'*, to self-improvement, including meditation.

Early Adulthood

Following school, Peter saw his joining the police force as an opportunity for *'adventure and action'* as well as having a significant starting pay, due to the Thatcher government initiatives. However, his thinking abilities were found to be at odds with the *'squad bashing'* and taking orders. In addition, he saw society at its worst, *'violence in all its forms'* including the miner strikes and civil riots. As well as these traumatic experiences he came to the conclusion that being an employee meant you were never really *'free'* from interference, intervention, and manipulation.

Peter took the opportunity following his *'escape'* before being fired from the police, to do a humanities degree, where his fighting, often a *'hair's breadth'* away, became an intellectual challenge to the tutors in the Polytechnic system, gathering him followers along the way. The uncanny intervention of independent schooling and sixth form meant he was prepared for the degree, a learning experience which for him was *'just like bliss'*.

Subsequently another significant turning point came, when with a *'bit of luck'* he *'fell into'* financial services, in a period resembling the *'Wild West'* in terms of regulation. There was no basic pay, commission only and manic working practices, with companies starting and collapsing all over the industry.

Yet he thrived in this *'do or die'* environment, one where his fighting skills of *'not giving up'* put him in good stead. He was able to turn negative objections, *'bit by bit'*, into positive financial freedom by *'opening'* the eyes of clients. However, he also experienced a real 'dawning' that sales and management do not really mix, you're *'one or the other'* and that bureaucracy effectively *'kills these businesses'* through the focus on process.

During this period Peter read everything he could get his hands on and felt in terms of his thinking these books were *'absolutely instrumental'* in developing his business attitude, incorporating the uncanny and mystical influences on his psyche. In addition, he felt himself more and more aware of how developing organisational structures took him further away from the entrepreneurial focus on the clients. This organisational culture also ran counter to his developing beliefs that the business should be less about one's self and more about the other.

Adulthood

At the age of 32 a series of events occurred which were to test those developing beliefs. Peter bought a country estate, which with hindsight he saw as clearly overextending himself. In addition the local authority announced a bypass nearby, as well as his home being burgled. He was left at the edge of bankruptcy, everything he had, *'suddenly just gone'*. In a very short time frame, a heimlich which was no longer a positive asset, coinciding with the end of Thatcher era.

At this point, with his wife fed up of his *'grandiose schemes'* and wishing for the practical security needed to start a family, there was a lot of pressure on him to get a *'salary job'*, to turn away from a start-up opportunity with a private wealth management bank. However, it was at this moment, following his reading of a book titled, 'The Power of Positive Thinking' by Vincent Peale (1956), Peter realised he had to make a *'huge leap of faith'*. He felt compelled to give it *'one more go'*, to *'set out'* into the unknown striving for a bigger goal, with nothing as yet to evidence a successful outcome.

Just then, with the threat of career ending *'financial black marks'* hanging over him, luck intervened. Peter's estate agent managed to find a buyer for his home, prepared to pay a premium and Peter was able to *'start all over again'*.

Peter found those moments to be *'little hinges that swing big doors'*, a phrase borrowed from W. Clement Stone's 1962 book 'The Success System That Never Fails'. For Peter these moments in time staying with the unknown, despite the pressure to return to certainty, appeared to have a mystical ability to attract what was needed or wished for from a universal energy, the *'law of attraction'*.

However, he was also aware of the phenomenal self-belief and faith needed at such times, not to let *'spirits'* shrink or *'disintegrate'* when faced with adversity, but to *'go down fighting'*. What was key to Peter's leadership thinking was the *'resilience'* taken from an *'absolute conviction'* that what he was providing was in the best interests of the other, even if that meant a *'bloody Titanic struggle'* motivating them to recognise it.

At the same time as being at a psychological cliff edge, Peter was reading ' How I Raised Myself From Failure To Success In Selling' a 1947 book by Frank Bettger, aimed at improving the system for people whose role it is to sell. Within this book he suddenly saw an example that gave him an uncanny experience of seeing his double.

The book described a salesman of the same age who was utterly useless, who had no sales and got fired. However, this salesman, like Peter felt he should give it one more try. This leap of faith would be without attachment to the outcome, as effectively he had already failed. Observing himself, noting things down and breaking events into smaller and smaller parts, as well as adopting a relentless positive attitude, led to success. This literary doppelgänger was someone Peter saw as a representation of his future self.

The other book which Peter found *'very influential'* in his thinking was a 1960 publication titled 'Psycho Cybernetics' by Maxwell Maltz. From this Peter shared the view that humans were essentially *'goal seeking mechanisms'* directed by subconscious images. Peter was *'absolutely convinced'* of the need for a clear goal in the subconscious rather than the 'aimless wandering' he saw in the *'stuff and process'* of the organisation, which he saw as a distracting nightmare to be kept at 'arm's length'.

The work of Maltz, along with others that Peter viewed as pioneering the so called *'super pos'* approach to thinking, lead Peter to what he thought was a mystical process. This being the powerful use of self-instruction imagery to alter the subconscious view. He felt this was a form of *'battering'* a goal into one's subconscious, using focused positive outlook, huge self-belief and believing in the *'law of attraction'* which lead to a metamorphose within the psyche. He felt it was not possible to remain the same and succeed. Fundamental change was needed within the self, which then changed how one did in business.

In effect, Peter believed that the subconscious could be cognitively put to work, providing the goal was persistently *'crystal clear'* and that all parts of the self were working towards it. The

mystical element came from the setting out, *'the faith bit'* that led to transformation of the self. However, he also felt confidence came from breaking things down to bite-size chunks, seeing progress and gaining renewed faith from that.

Curiously, during the interview Peter suddenly remembered how his initial striving in the start-up was experienced as being like trying to get an aeroplane off the ground,

> *...but it felt like I was getting off the ground and then somehow dropping a thumping great metal ball with a chain, out the, out the bottom of the plane and bringing the damn thing back down again and then having to do it all over again.*

<div align="right">Peter</div>

He recalled recognising that he might be 'self-sabotaging' and how he briefly saw a Gestalt Therapist. The result of this being an emergence of been told as an eight or nine-year-old that he would *'always be useless'* and *'never amount to anything'*. This identification of two conflicting internal parts, the teacher's prediction, as well as his desire to *'make it'*, freed him up and enabled a more cohesive self, bringing an end to his self-sabotaging.

Another important thread of Peter's development of leadership thinking, started in six form with a line in William Shakespeare's play 'Hamlet'.

> *"'there is neither right nor wrong, tis thinking makes it so''*

The power of the positive, together with his learning of Buddhist concepts, led to his view that ultimately this world was an illusion, we are not seeing it as it actually is, only through the screen of our perceptions of it, an event altering prism. This illusion further complicated by the idea that we aren't separate from what we perceive, since at a subatomic level we are not separate. Peter felt he had developed a sense of *'enlightenment'*, the removal of the idea of separation, through years of meditation. He recalled having 'out of body experiences', feelings

of *'rapture and ecstasy'*, seeing incredible lights, as well as experiencing immense peacefulness.

Yet Peter was very clear that these openings to a *'universal energy'* could not be stayed with for very long, they could not be planned for, *'they just arrive'*. However, he felt such experiences of *'coherence'* stayed with one and had influence long after the event.

Paraphrasing from Hamlet,

> *"there is more betwixt heaven and earth Horatio*
> *than will ever be in your imagination"*

Peter felt in many difficult situations of leadership, the power of *'let's imagine this'* in a positive way, could result in the unanticipated coming *'out of the blue'*. The event itself uncanny and mystical because there was *'no rhyme or reason behind it'*. Peter thought that this *'call'* on a universal energy might be conscious or unconscious, but was a worldwide *'human thing'*. He felt this imagining or daydreaming of the future *'what it's going to be like'* could result in unexpected *'coincidence'* and *'sheer luck'* arriving uncannily at the right time.

He exampled this by describing how when he *'set out in faith'* after almost losing everything, he imagined the house he would one day make his home. Then finding a place some 20 years later, experiencing walking through it in a dream like state, due to the fortunate timing of someone else dropping out from buying it. That his *'imagining and requesting'* had led to that material realisation.

Peter also spoke of how he was criticised at work by his team for not *'getting on with it'*, when he was daydreaming with something, not making a decision, but waiting to see what would emerge from the fear of a nightmare situation. His colleagues preferring a Protestant work ethic over his view, considered the *'hippy side'* of things. Although Peter felt he sat somewhere between the two.

Late Adulthood

As the interview drew to a close, Peter was able to speak of the negative side of the organisation. The use of his approach, somewhere between a hard-core work ethic and searching for enlightenment, had for him and his group brought substantial awards. However, with this also came a lot of jealousy and attempts to steal their business.

Yet for him he felt the most *'serious divide'* had developed between leadership and management when the former founding members left. Peter used the metaphor of the *'Smiths'* from the 1999 movie *'The Matrix'*. The 'Smiths' being the protectors of 'the system', a false reality designed to keep people from seeing the truth.

This for Peter was represented by an exponential growth of management, the use of *'compliance people'* and administration processes to *'dismantle'* anything entrepreneurial. His attitude been deemed as *'unhelpful'* by the 'Smiths' and he felt the focus growing ever more on smaller and smaller administrative detail.

The effect of this, *'chip, chip, chip'* on Peter became *'overwhelming'* as he felt the integrity of the business was being lost to *'the limelight'*, with the pressure on ever increasing numbers losing the focus on trust and relationships with the client. Peter realised it was *'time to get out'* and during the chaos of the Covid pandemic he managed to support his team in exiting the business to other careers.

Peter felt that to stay any longer in such an organisational establishment would result in being taken over by increasing madness from the system. In the *'new world that's coming'*, the focus was becoming ever more concerned with the information in the brochure, the *'Smith's are mounting up at such a rate, you cannot fight them'*. He concluded by describing how *'hollow'* it had become, *'not the stuff real'*, leaving no satisfaction in a job well done.

Structure

In many ways the structure of Peter's interview was reminiscent of his Titanic fights. My experience early on was being sucker punched, such as with the tone and honesty in his comment *'we had very little to eat'*. This took a moment to recover from, the edge of existence beginnings so far removed from his current wealth and position.

As we entered the second session and approached the typical two-hour boundary of many participants, he kept going, avoiding pings and calls from his mobile phone, his focus on telling being absolute. His narrative meandered this way and that, so that at times it seemed impossible to keep up. At other times, particularly when talking about his view on the nature of reality, the session itself felt dreamlike, far removed from the private banking sector group he had led for nearly three decades.

For myself, there was also a feeling of being bombarded without end, not to have the right of reply as in a typical question-and-answer style interview. Curiosities were sparked and then left, as the narrative ducked into another area, a new metaphor or another literary segue.

The interview ended with Peter remarking on how good it had been, a real satisfying tussle with things. For me it had felt like I had to adopt his mantra, to never give in, even if punched in the face, as that's what the *'other'* expects. The interview as a whole indeed felt very much like a challenge, a punch to the face of a predominant view in banking. However, as Peter put it, '*It's not worth it, unless you have a bit of a wrestle*'.

Thematic Analysis

Amongst the bob and weave of Peter's narrative, a number of poignant themes emerged. The first of which was an understanding what happened at the edge of things. Whether that edge was physically fighting for survival in a failing educational environment or losing everything in the unheimlich era of government, Yet also being able to see or wish for in the imagination an alternative reality. A reality perhaps only visible at the edge that requires being in and alone with the unknown. A mystical no-man's land that connects thinking to a universal force.

This then appears to lead to another theme, that at such edge conditions, there arises a need to produce in the mind, consciously or unconsciously, a *'call upon'* a universal containment beyond organisational or cultural norms. The response being an intervention experienced as unexpected events, which appear both uncanny and mystical in their origin and timing. These events as Peter put it, having *'no rhyme or reason'*. Although Peter suggests positivity somehow, perhaps of the molecular level, may attract such uncanny events.

Whilst Peter discussed both social ends of the acceptable spectrum, Protestant work ethic through to hippie views, he took a step further, exploring the theme of being able to call into question reality itself. For Peter, organisation was viewed as an anathema to entrepreneurial freedom and poverty a source of squashing the individual, both cultures he suggested being perhaps too readily accepted by people as reality. Bureaucracy and organisation for Peter are viewed as the illusion, as in the metaphoric matrix equivalent, where we are being kept from seeing true reality, the unheimlich within the heimlich.

The Final theme that emerged, over time, was that of masculinity. In Peter's literary doppelgänger, he saw a mirror image of a failing man, who through a rational and analysing approach became a great salesman, going from *'zero to a lot'*. However, the measure of success was very much numerical, the human viewed as a machine, *'a goal seeking mechanism'*, where the subconscious can be battered into submission by focus driven self-instruction.

Yet it seems that Peter was trying to find an alternative, a more human approach which required at least to strive towards something bigger, where a *'no-self'* view subsumes the 'other', a part of a coherence. The other not so much preyed upon, but a means of working towards enlightenment.

Summary and Discussion

There was a strange paradox in Peter's narrative. He did not immediately seem like a leader, but more like a resistance fighter against the establishment. Perhaps a product of the violence of his times. Also, whilst he vehemently opposes *'the Smiths'*, the processes and bureaucracy, he used what might be thought of as a key element of a Taylorist approach. The breaking down of the other people's arguments *'bit by bit'* until there is only one logical outcome, to sign on the dotted line.

However, I believe there was something more being accessed through his *'Titanic'* struggles. Something more primal in nature, beyond mere sales. On one level it was as if in that moment where things are stripped of bureaucracy and process, in the adrenaline of the fight, there was engagement with another dimension. Perhaps historically because of Peter's experience, the uncanny and mystical timing of his grandfather's death and the insurance policy that saved his

life, leadership for him is about a future reality in the unknown, but which Peter had absolute conviction in.

Yet I think there's something deeper still. Peter clearly led a large team to immense financial success, as well as being a leader in the founding of a business which handled *'mind-bending'* amounts of money. However, it was his understanding of an interventional universal force, which appears to have given him a great resilience to a sudden paradigm change.

His *'imagining and requesting'* of a universal force, where there is a 'no-self', even for a short periods, enabled belief in a beyond knowing. Particularly at critical junctures where a *'leap of faith'* was needed. So perhaps in the way he was a less obvious leader, but never the less one to whom others were drawn to follow, without rhyme or reason.

Peter's career exit, however, shows the power of *'the new age'* and how the Taylorist belief in the dominance of management, where there should be nothing unknown and all risks must be accounted for, is perhaps in ascendance. As Peter put,

> *It's like, you know, we've built the town, and now the estate agents are moving in.*

Peter's leadership style may well seem obsolete in a process driven era. However, the use of the uncanny and mystical as alternative dimensions in thinking contain the potential of the unheimlich views, may still reside for leaders such as Peter.

<u>Appendix K</u>

Participant 8: 'Linda', GP Practice Team Leader, (Female, Late 50's)

Biographical Data Chronology

1960   Linda born.

1968   (8)   Sent to Headmasters office for possibly killing of a student

1975   (15)   Death of Grandmother and Linda moved to alternative home

1977   (18)   Escaped from alternate family to safe house

1984 – 1986   (?)   18 months NHS Scrub nurse auxiliary

1986 – 1988   (?)   Deputy administrator at Psychiatric Unit

1987   (27)   Married

1988 – 1989   Role as mortgage data inputter

1988   (28)   Visit to Star Trek set, Universal Studios, USA

1989 – 1990   Medical records inputter

1990 – 1997   (34-41) Funeral business

1995   (35)   Bereavement counsellor talk given at funeral home

1997   (36)   Birth of twins following IVF treatment

2001 – 2017   (45-56) Practice as Independent Counsellor

2008   Accident on holiday requiring body cast for 3 months

2008   Took position as choir leader

2017   NHS practice data inputter

2019   NHS practice Team leader

2019   Grade 8 recorder exam postponed due to Covid pandemic

Biographical Data Chronology

Linda was the final participant. One who was initially tentative in responding. Through her narrative there emerged themes regarding a process of making sense in a chaotic unknown, a seismic shift in her career and the consequences to her leadership approach.

Childhood

Linda described her childhood as *'very good'* and herself as an assertive *'fiery child'*. She was fond of investigating things, as well as rallying the troops, right from the start of primary school. However, this all changed at the age of eight. A girl *'pestered'* Linda to join her group and when Linda pushed her away she *'keeled over'* and did not get up.

As a result, Linda was left in the headmaster's office for a *'gut churning hour',* not knowing if she had *'murdered'* the girl who had recently had a heart operation. While it transpired that the girl was okay, it left Linda deeply affected and the formation of the tenet, a *'condition of worth'* she would live by, '*I'll never push anybody, literally or figuratively again'*. Following this incident Linda became very introverted, never speaking out, *'never any trouble'* to anyone.

Adolescence

This early incident was further compounded by the death of Linda's grandmother when she was 15, which *'unravelled'* the family and resulted in Linda being placed with relatives she had never met before. Linda described how in the three years that followed *'a lot of bad stuff happened'*, with both physical and emotional abuse and the constant threat of violence to her and those she loved. Only with the help of an outside friend did she manage to escape and find refuge in a safe house, before finding her original family again.

During that period Linda describes being in a state where she had to *'almost exist, without existing'*, with her religion exposed as man-made and only her innate faith in *'a bigger force at work'* sustaining her, making sense of the chaotic randomness of events. Linda felt she had been 'very, very buried', emerging as a *'frightened, battered, starved teenager'* hypervigilance to the presence of anything felt to be aggressive or assertive.

Adulthood

Despite Linda's squashing of her natural instincts, determined to avoid *'pushing'* anyone, she often found herself '*thrust into*' into leadership roles, something that *'didn't feel natural'*. However, she felt that there was a mystical element, as if the universe was pushing her in that direction, telling her she *'should be leading'*. Yet once in the limelight of leadership she would often leave the job and replace it with another administrative inputting role. As she later confessed she found containment in her love of *'putting things in the right order'* for the system at work, where *'accuracy is everything'*. This very much in contrast to seeing herself as a *'quite sketchy person'* in life.

In tandem to this work life where she wished to be *'no trouble'* and just do a job until she *'dropped of her perch',* she spoke of coming into contact with another realm. One which she knew was pure fantasy but has had an *'amazing influence'* on her thinking about groups and leadership, the world of Star Trek. A realm that curiously arrived to the TV screen shortly after the incident at the primary school, Star Trek was a world a million miles from the small estate she lived in.

Then something happened which she described as proof of the mystical. On a trip to universal studios in America, she arrived with her husband to find the exhibition closed and sought solace in the gift shop. However, out of the blue a salesperson informed her that she should go back, that the actual crew were filming a commercial. Linda described the euphoria, the dream like encounter with her idols, physically meeting in reality what she had only ever imagined. She felt the experience of this meeting, even if she were to lose her *'marbles'* or *'go do lally'* would never be forgotten or stop influencing her life.

Yet despite this encounter, which turned her into a 'superfan', she still took positions which for the most part avoided human contact, which might require any form of assertion of herself over others. She worked for a funeral service, where humour amongst employees was a very important emotional *'outlet'* in the absence of any official *'offload mechanism'* which gave her a sense of belonging. She found her work heimlich to be with the dead.

Late Adulthood

However, she knew there was more. Whilst she enjoyed the role of listening to people's stories, helping them in their grief, it was only when a visiting bereavement counsellor came to the business that she had what she called a *'lightbulb moment'*. The realisation she was only *'one fraction away'* from where she *'really wanted to be'*.

She felt this was a light shone on her to say, *'look, this is where you need to be, over here'*. The mystery and the timing were profound to her. However, because her children, the result of, she held off for four years before starting her training. But that significant moment, that visitation, changed her to the core. As she said later, *'if you cut my head off, it would say counsellor all the way through'*.

Two further events of uncanny timing and mystical influence appeared to lead Linda to seeing her true position as a leader. The first of these resulted from an accident on holiday where she damaged vertebrae and required a body cast. This in turn lead to a visit from a new priest who spoke of forming a long absent choir, then suddenly informing Linda *'an' you're going to lead it'*. Whilst this left Linda uncomfortable and *'unseated'* from her defensive personality, it also *'ignited'* her buried passion for music, putting her literally centre stage in a leadership position

The second event which was to truly confirm Linda's belief in the uncanny and mystical was to happen a decade later. Whilst working yet again as a data imputer with a large GP practice, it was suggested she would be a good team leader for the service. It *'planted the seed'*, and because of their faith in the idea of her leadership, she herself became curious and *'drawn to'* asking herself, *'let's see if I can'*?

The first of two interviews for the leadership position was with service managers. This interview she described as *'like no other'*, initially joking with the panel and then decided to take a leap of faith, *'to just go for it'* revealing she was a Star Trek fan, that she saw things differently. It turned out all of them on the panel were *'on a wavelength'* with her and she felt something mystical in the experience, leaving her in something 'like euphoria'. She felt she had been *'drawn to it without even realising'* the *'mystical influence'* at work.

While however she did not share this side in the second interview with the GP panel, she carried this experience into what she felt was *'a job meaning so much'*, an *'odd mix'* of leadership and counselling, in her new leading role, *'an odd way of being really'*.

There was something fitting that the last chronological point of Linda's narrative was her preparation to stand up in examination of her level eight music recorder, only interrupted by the Covid pandemic. Linda spoke of how mystical the bringing together of lost parts of herself had been, a musical reuniting with herself through the act of leadership.

Structure

Linda's narrative was often humorous and creating a sense that it was sort of funny she should fall into positions of leadership. As the interview progressed it was tempting to fall into this, to see punchlines as useful data and mentally relax into the watching of a routine, an act removed from self. However, when this veil was pulled aside, it was the unsaid, that often spoke the most.

When referencing the headmaster's office, the pause in narrative and the phrase *'gut wrenching'* was felt as a suspension of time, a feeling of falling endlessly and the echo of the question, am I a murderer? Even if the answer was already known, the experience of that unknowing was palpable in the telling, creating a feeling of claustrophobic unease, the interviewer being complicit in viewing what should not be seen.

So too with the three years where *'bad stuff happened'*, a narrative void which, while skirted around and referred to obliquely, had a gravity throughout the interview. The absence of its detail casting a shadow, how does one *'exist without existing'*, what force is it that requires such a response? A rhetorical question, one that created a sense of edge, not knowing what was going to happen next, might things tip over into chaos.

I do not think it was unimportant that the emergence of the mystical events in Linda's story also felt like moments of relief in the interview. There was a sense of relief, of being seated with the Star Trek anecdotes, as a respite from the unseating experience about the unknown truth of one's natural instincts present in leadership. A truth revealed in silent moments beyond the tones of a stand-up routine the narration.

Thematic Analysis

In the analysing of Linda's narrative a number of themes emerged. The first of these themes was the need to defend against the uncomfortable experience of being *'unseated'* when thrust into the role of leadership. When leadership was deeply felt to be murderous or unnatural, experienced as walking on breaking ice, at the edge of failing. What followed then appeared to be a defensive use of the organisation. The system being used at its most mechanical, the inputting of data, as if being a part of machine-like certainty could distance the individual from some unknown terror within, arising within the role of leadership.

The second theme was how *'squashed'* nature instincts, the outcome of early anchoring incidents, find re-emergence in unexpected events. These events being felt by Linda as uncanny and mystical in nature.

In three key events, the priest's knowing she would lead of the choir, the encounter with her Star Trek idols and the interviewer panels crucial acceptance of her *'odd way of being'*, it is the unexpected and synchronistic manner in which these happen which is experienced as uncanny and mystical. These events are interpreted by Linda as symbols of a *'bigger force'*, a universal force influencing direction when she had been in a heightened state of not knowing, fearful of what lay ahead. In particular when the psycho-social containment of *'man-made'* structures, such as the law, religion, and family, had failed catastrophically.

The short euphoric nature of these mystical encounters leads to a third theme, the long-term influence of such events to support future leadership actions. Linda appeared to feel anxiety at the prospect of not knowing *'enough knowledge'* to lead, yet felt supported by the past mystical encounters. These uncanny experiences had then enabled her to take a leaps of faith into leadership, when *'flying by the seat of my pants'* as she put it, to become more comfortable in the unseating experiences of not knowing.

This then translated into developing a leadership approach of fostering curiosity and letting events *'unfold'*, even if it might risk killing the cat. The unfolding being a result of containing the tension between temptation in leadership to control others and the need to deeply listen to the other, to what was not being said. However, for Linda the resultant emergent direction was also being open to the inclusion of a third, the unseen universal force. So, by not forcing a direction the unexpected might emerge, the product of leadership without *'pushing'*, referred to by Linda as *'an odd position to be in'*.

Summary and Discussion

In some ways the overarching theme of Linda's narrative might be thought of as the abdication of leadership. A taking flight in response to having seen and experienced its destructive potential. The rejoinder being the interpretation of future random events as mystical objects, in an attempt to return to **'it'**. In a sense a reunification with this lost aspect of self, a repressing of natural instincts until the time and environment were suitable for their return and expression.

Indeed, it appears to be a constant need in Linda's case, to use the systems pressed in work for such repression. For example, in the man-made data inputting, hoped to be maintained until falling from the perch or the longest held job being in the funeral service, perhaps a means of mourning for this lost sense of self. Both would strongly point to a need to repress something unsafe to mental equilibrium.

However, it was the use of the mystical object sought to recover from the lost relationship to self, which seems most worth understanding. The true self, the fiery assertive personality of Linda's childhood, appears to have been relinquished for a false self which was *'no trouble'* to others. In a way, turning a blind eye to the true nature of self. However, it appeared to be the temporary experience of failure in deep rooted institutions, law, religion, and family, which forced the unconscious to search out a structure beyond organisation, system, or society.

Does the unconscious create a mystical object, interpreting a series of uncanny events as a host structure, suitable for containment of unbearable instincts? Although another perspective might be to suggest the unconscious action is to metaphorically reach deeper than itself, to the oceanic equivalent beyond the abyss the, Hadal zone.   In other words, suggesting the need of a system of *'bigger force'* than the repressive unconscious, an all-encompassing connecting field.

For example, we are only now beginning to understand such things as the 'Higgs particle' effect in quantum physics. Does our seeing a pattern mentally create an affect at such an unseen level? Does the unconscious at conditions of near collapse, such as a perceived failing paradigm, seek more meaningful alternatives, symbols of something bearing no man-made influence. Symbols of something beyond our seeing. Things that exist in the Hadal zone after all have no eyes.

What does seem evident is that the interpretation of the mystical event results in a belief of seeing something differently than before, the *'odd way of being'*. This being neither leadership in a traditional top-down hierarchy or a pure cooperative, but an understanding that if the *'not*

knowing' can be imagined or tolerated something unexpected might emerge from the existence of a universal force. In such a moment an enlightening influence might be experienced.

I think the key here is the igniting force of curiosity in its purist sense, being open to such an unknown might also open one to primal instincts which are not easy to control. Curiosity might be a sort of momentary undoing of the protective barrier between consciousness and unconsciousness enabling the full depth of being and an emergence of a fuller self, perhaps beyond the unconscious of protective repression.

Appendix L

Ethics approval letter

The Tavistock and Portman NHS
NHS Foundation Trust

Quality Assurance & Enhancement
Directorate of Education & Training
Tavistock Centre
120 Belsize Lane
London
NW3 5BA

Tel: 020 8938 2699
https://tavistockandportman.nhs.uk/

Noel McQuaid

By Email

5/92019

Dear Noel,

Re: Trust Research Ethics Application

Title: An exploration of the uncanny and mystical influences in leadership during times of uncertainty

Thank you for submitting your updated Research Ethics documentation. I am pleased to inform you that subject to formal ratification by the Trust Research Ethics Committee your application has been approved. This means you can proceed with your research.

Please be advised that any changes to the project design including changes to methodology/data collection etc, must be referred to TREC as failure to do so, may result in a report of academic and/or research misconduct.

If you have any further questions or require any clarification do not hesitate to contact me.

I am copying this communication to your supervisor.

May I take this opportunity of wishing you every success with your research.

Best regards,

Paru Jeram
Secretary to the Trust Research Degrees Subcommittee
T: 020 938 2699
E: academicquality@tavi-port.nhs.uk

cc.   Course Lead, Supervisor, Research Lead

<u>Appendix M</u>

The Tavistock and Portman **NHS**

NHS Foundation Trust

Participant Information Sheet.

Introduction

The program of research I am undertaking will represent my final research project and thesis for the Doctorate in Consultation to Organisations. This document will give some background information related to myself, the course I am undertaking, the research and methodology and, finally, issues related to permission and confidentiality.

Personal Background

I am an experienced Consultant within the engineering sector. I completed a MA in Consulting and Leading in Organisations at the Tavistock Centre in London three years ago. It is here that I am currently studying the Doctorate Programme in Consultation to Organisations.

My professional background has largely been within engineering and includes experience of senior management and leadership as well as consultation within a large Local Authority. In addition, I am an accredited counsellor with over 10 years working for NHS services.

As a consultant I have worked in the private and public. My current role as Team Leader of a design team, as well as working with coaching clients, engages me in providing consultancy to groups and individuals.

The Course

The professional Doctorate in Consultation to the Organisation is run by the Tavistock Clinic and the University of Essex. The course is designed to equip organisational consultants to meet the complex needs of organisations in the private and public sectors and seeks to develop a culture of applicable research led by professional practice which will increase the theoretical base of the profession.

The course and qualification maintain a rigorous research focus, as well as taught components of material and skills relevant to the profession. All research proposals have to be agreed by the Assessment Board of the Tavistock Clinic and University of Essex prior to their initiation.

Research Title

An Exploration of the Uncanny and Mystical Influences on Leadership,

in the Context of Rising Technological Complexity and Declining Organisational Certainty.

Research

Being in senior leadership can mean that the emergence of unsettling thoughts or moments of wonderment which might be considered irrational in the organisational context, such as those that might be considered Uncanny or Mystical, may often not be spoken about or acknowledged as having influence in developing leaders and leadership thinking within their current roles. The inability to narrate such experiences may prove to be a 'hidden asset' in understanding the transforming of experience of alternative thinking within the wider organisational and psycho social context for leadership.

The surfacing of such experiences in my consultancy work has led to useful reflection by clients and an integration of this expanded context into their working role. This has led me to identify this as an area of research needed in an age dominated by instrumental thinking and driven by the speed of rising technological complexity where alternative thinking in leadership may sit uncomfortably within such a context, an area of research I hope is of importance and value in the field of consultancy, leadership, and a greater understanding of the unspoken influences within organisations.

Research Methodology

The model of research I will use will be based on a Biographic Narrative Interpretative Method. It is a model which explores peoples lived experiences through biographic narrative interviews. In essence, this methodology uses a three-stage approach to interviewing with initially open and then more targeted questions.

Interviews are taped and then transcribed with participant's identity anonymised (see confidentiality). The process of interview is formed of 2 sub-sessions taking approximately two hours in total, with a break. This should represent the overall time commitment required, however, following transcription I may need to contact participants for some further clarification on any points raised. In this instance, the methodology incorporates the option of an additional 3rd sub session interview suitably arranged in agreement with the participant.

Occasionally, this open interview method may bring up issues or feelings that maybe unexpected, therefore at any time it is fine to stop the interview or have a break, should the need arise. In the circumstances that the participant wished to seek external support as a result of emotions arising from the open narrative, they would be directed to their own organisations Employee Assistance Provider (EAP) or a suitable agency such as Tavistock Consulting (TC), UK Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP) or the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP).

Confidentiality

Interviews will take place at the participant's workplace during working hours (defined as 9:00am – 5:00pm). The interview room should be a suitable environment to carry out the interview in a confidential space, enabling the recording of interviews without the likelihood of interruption or being overheard by those external to the interview. Interviews cannot be held in a public space.

The data gathered from the interviews (recordings of the interviews and written transcription) will be anonymised, held electronically, and shared in a fully processed anonymised written format with up to five members of a data analysis focus group and two thesis supervisors, all of whom who are bound by confidentiality.

The research sample size of 4-6 participants may have implications in the identification of the industry sector, however all participants details in the research will remain anonymous. All details which would allow identification, of the individual or the organisation, will be changed to protect confidentiality in the written thesis or any other publication.

Further to this any information that is stored will be in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018. The only exception to the data being held confidentially is if there is a risk of imminent harm to self and / or others.

In the event of any further publication all participant details will be anonymised.

Right to Withdraw

It is important that you do not feel under any obligation or pressure to be part of the research and throughout the process of interview, or at any stage after, you have a right to pause the proceedings or to withdraw.

Permission

I will not be seeking any further permission in respect of this research other than from the assessment board and the individual participants who are managers and leaders in their organisations. If you feel that you require permission from your organisation you would need to have this in place prior to agreement.

Ethical Approval and Conduct

This project has been approved by the Tavistock and Portman Foundation Trust's Research Ethics Committee (TREC). Conduct during the research is governed by Code of Practice: Professional Doctorates for the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust 2018-19. Should you have any further questions on the conduct of this study please contact Simon Carrington, Head of Academic Governance and Quality Assurance. Tel: +44 (0)20 8938 2366 or email academicquality@Tavi-Port.nhs.uk

Acknowledgement

I hope those people who take part will receive some benefit and insights through the participation in the project. I understand that in busy professional lives giving up time and energy to take part in research is difficult and not easily achieved. I wanted to offer my thanks and gratitude for your time and commitment in offering to take part in the research. It is greatly valued and appreciated.