

Navigating Complexity: Understanding Organizational Complexity through Interactive Theatre

Jim Force, Ph.D.

Force Enterprises, Inc.
Victoria, British Columbia, Canada
jforce@shaw.ca

Colin Funk

Leadership Learning Lab, Leadership Development
The Banff Centre
Banff, Alberta, Canada
Colin_Funk@banffcentre.ca

Abstract

This paper presents the basis for a new sense-making tool - enacted through the medium of theatre - for a better understanding and successful navigation of organizational complexity, deep-values diversity and narrative knowledge. The tool draws its philosophical underpinnings from the science of hermeneutics, and is demonstrated through the four phases (enchantment, imagination, crafting and lifeworld sensibility) of an aesthetic-based learning experience by utilizing the ideas of theatre practitioners Augusto Boal (Invisible Theatre), Richard Schechner (Environmental Theatre), and playwright Harold Pinter. Through a review of the production *Mid-Course Conversations* (a long-form improvisation presented during the Leading in a Complex World program, at Leadership Development, The Banff Centre - April 2005), the nature of complexity within organizations; story as a leader's tool, and the leader as Hermenaut - a seeker, questioner, and crafter of meaning. Building on this base, this paper addresses how interactive theatre engages learners in direct experience, and the various means of contemplating this direct experience as a key requirement of developing integral leaders.

Keywords: aesthetics, complexity, leadership, organizations, sense-making, theatre

Introduction

Mid-Course Conversations, an interactive theatre experience inspired by Interface's shift from a traditional manufacturing organizational model to a sustainable enterprise (Anderson 1998) was designed to animate the leadership concepts being presented in The Banff Centre's leadership development program, *Leading in a Complex World: The Ecology of Leadership*. This five-day program was designed for experienced and seasoned leaders who operate in complex business and personal environments, or in challenging and ambiguous organizational structures. The program draws on ecological principles, complex adaptive systems, complexity theory and narrative practice as learning sources.

The theatre production was created in The Banff Centre's Leadership Learning Lab by the Leadership Arts Ensemble, a small group of program facilitators, faculty and artists interested in integrating artistic practice with leadership practice. The main purpose in creating this production was to give program participants an aesthetics-based learning experience related to the complexities involved in organizational change and to explore the notion of an organization as a complex, nonlinear, adaptive system organized through story and, thus, understood through "narrative knowledge."

The enormous complexity of today's global economy with its proliferation of global institutions has not only changed the nature of how businesses are run but "represents a dramatic shift in the conditions for life on the planet" (Senge et al. 2004:8). No longer can the mechanistic thinking of the industrial age effectively deal with the nexus of problems and issues brought about by environmental devastation, climate change, extreme poverty, population growth and terrorism, each of which in order to be dealt with requires a more holistic, systems thinking perspective that takes long-term environmental and organizational sustainability into consideration. As is evident by the poor results of organizational change initiatives (Capra 2002), no longer can simple command and control leadership styles deal effectively with the diversity and complexity found within the workplace.

Consequently, there is a new set of characteristics, qualities and competencies being demanded of today's leaders and managers. In the current business environment of globalization, leaders and managers are expected to be systems thinkers, to be sensitive to cultural and ethnic diversity issues, to make value-based decisions, to be creative and innovative, to be aware of their mental models, to lead cross-functional and virtual teams, to engage in reflective practices, to demonstrate adaptive leadership styles, to be life-long learners, to make meaning and to create knowledge as well as run profitable businesses. According to Kegan (1994), demands such as these, and those arising from the complexity of society in general, tend to out-strip our mental capacity. He suggests that for leaders and managers to meet the mental demands of modern organizational life, a transformation in the capacities of the adult mind is needed. One that is as profound as the shift from magical thinking to concrete thinking in school age children or from concrete thinking to abstract thinking in adolescence. A transformation not in what we know, but in how we know, in the complexity of our consciousness.

Kegan (1994) argues that this need for a transformation of consciousness requires a new curriculum, a need to view leader development from a new lens. We maintain that this new lens includes viewing the leader "as a *Hermeneut* - a seeker, questioner, and crafter of meaning" (Woodward & Funk 2004:2), as one with an expanding consciousness. If leaders as Hermeneuts are to transform their consciousness, they can no longer remain simple passive recipients of information or data about organizations and leadership, but rather they must develop the capacity to interpret information, question the current status of what is known and unknown, seek insights into life experiences and create meaning from them. As such, the leader development curriculum must be designed to go beyond just teaching the acquisition of knowledge to include opportunities for expanding the learner's capacity for insights that

create a match "between the way they [leaders] are making sense and the way their culture is *demanding* they make sense" (Kegan 1994:77). However, as Kegan maintains, "Insight cannot be taught or learned, but the consciousness that gives rise to insight can be *developed*" (128). Woodward and Funk (2004) argue that methods for enhancing the consciousness required to lead effectively in today's world can be developed through a hermeneutic approach that "reflect[s] and support[s] the psycho-socio-cultural-environmental nature of meaning-making. [And that] aesthetic processes provide a solid foundation for selecting and developing these methods" (11). Before exploring how interactive theatre was used as a sense-making tool to facilitate the process of developing consciousness, we will next consider the complexity and deep-value structures of organizational culture and their relationship to the notion of integral leadership.

Theoretical Underpinnings

How we come to understand organizations and thus leadership has traditionally been based on our understanding of the physical world via the sciences, particularly physics. Currently, there is much discussion in the organizational development and leadership literature related to the complexity and ecological sciences. Such terms as autopoiesis, bifurcation points, chaos theory, deep ecology, entropy, fractals, Gaia theory, nonlinear, self-organizing systems, and systems thinking are all becoming part of the organizational and leadership development lexicon. Thus, we look to the complexity sciences for understanding what it means to lead in a complex world.

Stacey (2003) identifies two insights from the complexity sciences that have a profound influence on developing the leader as Hermenaut. The first, which captures the essence of complex adaptive systems, is that "interaction between entities has the intrinsic capacity to produce emergent coherence in the absence of any blueprint or program" (14). We take this to mean that the evolution of a human system cannot be planned or determined in advance. Stacey maintains that organizations, seen as complex adaptive systems, emerge as participative self-organizing systems governed by processes of communication and joint action. Griffin (2002) describes this participative self-organizing process as "the direct experience of relationship between human beings" (154), and "in their communicative interaction with each other, persons form and are formed by groups (organizations and societies), *at the same time* as continuity and potential transformation" (58). This means that organizations as well as individuals have the capacity to remain as they are (continuity) while simultaneously having the capacity for change (transformation). Both continuity and transformation are determined more from interaction of events than by design (Streatfield 2001). The implication of this for Hermenauts is that the traditional assumption that because we perceive the world as orderly we can control it is no longer valid. As such, Hermenauts must gain insight into the paradoxical duality of change and continuity as simultaneous dimensions of organizational life of which they are both "in control" and "not in control" (Streatfield). This means that Hermenauts must have the courage to act into the unknown, to take action without knowing the outcome in advance. Thus, from a hermeneutic approach, as Woodward and Funk (2004) argue, leading becomes "a constantly emergent, creative act" (2), one in which Hermenauts must craft their actions through deep self-understanding and reflective thought. Senge et al. (2004) describe the reflective process as *presencing*, as "reaching a state of clarity about and connection to what is emerging, to an 'inner knowing'" (89). Without the capability for deep reflective thought, leaders' capacity to question old ways of being and craft new meanings will likely restrict their ability to meet the complex demands of modern society.

The second insight Stacey (2003) identifies from the complexity sciences is that "nonlinear iteration of interaction between diverse entities explains how novelty emerges" (14). In the context of human organizations this means that innovation, change and learning emanate from the unpredictable mix of multiple ongoing conversations between people with diverse

perspectives and experiences. The mechanistic model of organizational change stems from the notion of a predictable linear world in which change can be controlled and thus managed. This perspective then puts the onus of the outcome of change initiatives on the manager's shoulders. If the change fails to evolve as predicted, it is the manager who is often blamed. This second insight from the complexity sciences challenges this mechanistic notion in that it perceives change as a set of nonlinear interwoven processes of communication that cannot be managed with any degree of predictability (Fonseca 2002). This insight then changes the role of manager/leader from one of driving organizational change to a predictable outcome to one of setting the stage for new and meaningful patterns of interacting and conversing to emerge. To do so effectively requires the understanding that conversation is a self-organizing phenomenon from which meaning emerges (Streatfield 2001). This demands a hermeneutic approach, one in which leaders perturb systems without trying to control them. As such, Hermenauts need to have the capacity to constantly be interpreting and reinterpreting what is happening, making new meanings from what is emerging, reflecting on those new meanings and acting from what has been learned. In short, the role of leaders is no longer one of direct and control, but rather one of constructing and reconstructing meaning through ongoing processes of reflecting, questioning and acting in conjunction with others. Streatfield contends that it is this hermeneutic leadership ability to "participate creatively in the formation of transient meaning, which enables all of an organization's members to continue living with the anxiety generated by change" (136). In other words, the role of Hermenauts is to "strive to influence the conditions for going on together" (Shaw 2002:73).

These two insights from complexity sciences make it evident that sense-making/meaning-making is an ongoing and essential function of leadership. From a hermeneutic perspective meaning is not seen as located externally to any one person or group of individuals, but rather as emerging from the ongoing interactions between individuals in everyday conversations and interactions. As a result of these conversations and interactions, "leaders create meaning not by fixing something - by correcting a misinterpretation - but by a shifting of ideas and frameworks - *kaleidoscopically*" (Woodward and Funk 2004:8). In this sense meaning-making is an interpretive act, a hermeneutic interaction.

Leading in a Complex World

Organizations have been viewed metaphorically from a variety of perspectives: as machines, as organisms, as brains, as systems, as cultures (Morgan 1998). For the purpose of gaining insights into the dynamics of human interaction within an organization related to organizational change, we chose to explore organizations as cultures as part of our leadership development program, *Leading in a Complex World*. Given Schein's suggestion that "Culture' should be reserved for the deeper level of basic assumptions and beliefs that are shared by members of an organization, that operate unconsciously, and that define in a basic 'taken-for-granted' fashion an organization's view of itself and its environment" (1985:6), we explored the assumptions, beliefs and deep values at work in organizations through the framework of spiral dynamics (Beck and Cowan 1996).

"Spiral dynamics is the study of the emergence and patterns of deep values that mold strategists' worldviews, form corporate mindsets, structure leader/follower relationships, establish decision structures, and define reality" (Cowan and Todorovic 2000:5). As a framework for understanding human behavior within a cultural context, spiral dynamics identifies a series of eight developmental evolving deep-values systems or stages that ebb and flow situationally throughout a person's life. While all stages are "legitimate expressions of the human experience they are not 'equal' in their capacity to deal with complex problems in society" (Beck 2000:2). Through an understanding of this dynamic of human values development Hermenauts develop insights into the complexity of why people think and act as they do. Hence, spiral dynamics provides a framework for Hermenauts to explore their own beliefs, assumptions and values, which is an essential aspect of leader development as leaders

"embed their own assumptions in the ongoing daily life of their organizations" (Schein 1985:242).

In the first tier of seven stages people experience their own set of beliefs and values as the only valid ones. Consequently, people embedded in any of these stages negate the beliefs and values of the other stages. It is only when people jump to the second tier or yellow/turquoise stage that they begin to see and accept the value of each of the previous stages. This shift from first tier to second tier is very similar to Kegan's (1994) transformation of consciousness from 4th Order (modern thinking) to 5th Order (postmodern thinking). A transition from being able to identify one's own ideology to stepping outside of one's ideology and evaluating it against other ideologies. These shifts from first to second tier and from 4th to 5th Order of consciousness are shifts of insight, of being, rather than shifts in knowledge, in acting, shifts that are only now beginning to emerge. Beck and Cowan (1996) estimate that only 1% of the world's population has currently reached second tier development, while Kegan claims that few ever fully make this shift to 5th Order and those that do never do so before their mid-forties. The implications of this for leader development is not in trying to bring all leaders to a second tier or 5th Order consciousness, but rather to assist them in becoming what Wilber (2003) calls being integrally informed; that is, having an awareness and knowledge of the potential and possibilities of these more complex levels of consciousness for dealing effectively with the demands of modern society. To do this means creating new and better ways for leaders to become seekers, to become questioners, to become meaning makers, to begin the journey to becoming Hermenauts. The aesthetic practice of interactive theatre is one of these ways.

Designing and implementing the Aesthetic Learning Experience

Aesthetic learning experiences have been the mainstay in Leadership Development programs at The Banff Centre for a number of years, primarily as a unique compliment to the traditional leadership and management training regime. Over time faculty and staff have been encouraged by the emergence of a number of aesthetic methods and pedagogical tools (performing arts, fine arts, and emersion in nature) for developing basic leadership competencies and character (e.g. personal values clarification, personal presence and sense-making). It is not uncommon in a number of the public and custom programs to hear and see that the aesthetic approaches and creative experiences are program highlights, connecting participants in deep and meaningful ways, as well as advancing and accelerating their learning. The success from these experiences has revealed four key processes for developing an aesthetic sensibility: Enchantment; Imagination; Crafting; Lifeworld Sensibility (Woodward & Funk 2004). This four-fold process also reflects the means by which aesthetic processes can be explored and utilized as design guides for creating unique learning experiences, at the same time creating the appropriate foundations for supporting the development of hermeneutic leading.

1. Enchantment

This capacity reflects the Hermenaut's ability to find fascination, allure, and attractiveness in everyday people, events and objects, to feel wonder, to identify with and create the sacred. It is the willingness to be entranced and arrested by a moment, a scene; it is the ability to fantasize and be seduced by things of the world.

2. Imagination

Imagination is the ability to see new possibilities and paths and to read deeply into events, people, and stories to find hidden or deeper meaning. It is the capacity to think metaphorically and mythologically. This capacity provides a key element in living through experience and is the basis for inquiry and exploration.

3. Crafting

Crafting is about making or bringing something into being. It is the capacity to live intentionally with mindfulness and deliberation. This capacity includes the effort to explore, discover, create and express often with a degree of artistry one's character.

This capacity requires thought and reflection as well as a style of spontaneity that captures and expresses the needs of the immediate.

4. Lifeworld Sensibility

The lifeworld is the environment into which Hermenauts express themselves. It is the living, ecological system made up of nature, people and their networks. This is the capacity to remain unique in a world that uses culture to normalize. It is the capacity of engaging in the lifeworld, of gaining its opportunities and riches without losing one's self. Finally, it is the capacity for leaders to develop an ecological sensibility.

The process of movement from Enchantment, Imagination, Crafting to Lifeworld Sensibility provides the aspiring Hermenaut with a touchstone and point of reference en route to a transformation of consciousness. One form of 'new curriculum' for this transformation is interactive theatre. By mapping the four-fold aesthetic engagement process onto traditional theatre storyline structure: beginning (Enchantment); middle, plot development (Imagination); denouement (Crafting); and conclusion (Lifeworld Sensibility), we create a theatre experience that follows closely in line with Augusto Boal's vision of using dramatic techniques to "activate passive spectators to become spect-actors – engaged participants rehearsing strategies for personal and social change" (Schutzman and Cohen-Cruz 1994:1). As a result, leadership development participants were treated to an interactive theatre experience as a means to assist in understanding organizational complexity and in building capacity for navigating complex scenarios, a primary requirement of leading hermeneutically.

The play, *Mid-Course Conversations*, was created as a long-form improvisation. It was presented in a number of site-specific environments throughout The Banff Centre campus. It encompassed 13 characters in 22 scenes, with many of the scenes running in parallel. The main purpose of the play was to provide the participants with a "concept animation" tool for synthesizing their learning through a highly interactive experience. Many of the key theories and learning points of the course were embedded in the play as either content, character motivators, plot, action, or as dilemmas or questions surfacing as a result of character ambiguity and interaction with others, often in confrontation with personal values.

The over-arching theme of the course, organizational change, complexity and sustainability, was amplified within the play through its physical action and narrative content. The opening of the play began with a physical tableau of all of the present and future characters, transitioning into a presentation from the CEO and his senior team announcing a sudden and radical sustainability change plan. The start point of the tableaux, impassioned and emotional internal and external monologues all helped in inviting participants to enter deeply into the "Enchantment" process. Emersion in the enchantment stage was critical in allowing the participants to be arrested by the moment, leading to the suspension of disbelief - quieting the inner critic and judge - and as a result freeing up mental space in order to be open for new and unforeseen discoveries that they would soon be called upon to notice.

In the first scene of the play, participants, as audience members, were positioned as employees at an annual general meeting and addressed by the company CEO who announced a major change initiative, a move from business-as-usual to a progressive environmentally "green" enterprise. The announcement initiates a ripple-effect of both threats and opportunities for the employees of the company, sending all of the characters out of the boardroom (theatre) followed by the participants en route to the next series of scenes in various locations on The Banff Centre campus. At the end of the first scene, program participants were given a narrative map outlining the physical journey and location of individual characters that they were to follow or meet up with. Each participant was given a different map and series of characters to follow if they so wished, and in doing so, had their own unique understanding of the meta-narrative that was unfolding within and outside the organization. The basic rationale for having the participants follow the actors as semi-voyeurs builds on Edgar Schein's notion that careful observation and reflective participation in

organizational culture can be more instructive than a deep knowledge of an organization's, mission, vision and values. In Schein's words, "If you want to understand an organization's culture, go to a meeting" (Senge et al. 2004:48).

As the individual participants followed the characters to various internal and external meeting spaces on campus (offices, boardrooms, hotel lobbies, parkades), and, as they were introduced to more and more characters, the storyline grew deeper and more complex. This part of the play experience, moving through five different scenes and locations along with the introduction of new and colourful characters at each scene, served to assist in actively triggering the imagination of the participants. In terms of the participants' learning experience, this imagination stage proved fruitful in building personal capacity in "The ability to see what isn't there, to recognize its power, and to make that power manifest" (Vehar, et al. 2001:11). Competency in engaging and working with the imagination is key in sharpening the capacity for inquiry and in discovering hidden or deeper meaning. It also provides the means for individuals to temporarily live vicariously through the actions and emotions of others (characters) thus leading to possible insights into the universality of the human condition.

After approximately ninety minutes the participants returned to the original theatre building. They met in the theatre lobby, where a coffee station was set up. There were no instructions other than to have a fifteen-minute break before entering back into the theatre for the final scene. The participants quickly became highly energized as they reconnected with each other in the lobby, eagerly sharing stories in an effort to make sense of individual character actions, plots, sub-plots, and the larger story of the organization. The gathering point had in itself all of the common attributes of office storytelling and gossiping around the water-cooler (Prusak 2001) puts forth an intriguing thought: "If I were to put a microphone in every coffee station, every doorway, every stairwell, in the Global 1000 firms and we collected all the stories, over a month and categorized them, what would these stories be about?" (II.A. Stories). In our case, participants were less concerned about the content of the stories, more interested in how the pieces fit together. Participants quickly and naturally moved into the process of "Crafting," the desire to create meaning out of their personal experience, insights and imagination. This process was intensified by the lack of complete information, and confirms Stacey's (2001) notion that coherence eventually emerges in the absence of structure. Competency in the art of crafting, "synthesizing issues, objects, events, and actions into integrated, meaningful wholes" (Horth and Palus 2002:3) positions the leader towards greater appreciation of the broader situation, and it is precisely this sense of gestalt that gives coherence and can set direction for a leader's future course of action.

For the final scene of the play the participants return to the theatre to see the CEO and the senior team a week later address the audience/employees. After the CEO restates his vision to the team and the employees, it is obvious that something has changed in him and the others. Each member of the senior team speaks directly to the audience sharing an internal monologue revealing their current state of mind. All of the characters reveal that the change initiative has triggered a powerful personal introspection, creating dilemma, paradox or the need for deeper questioning. The audience/participants are left with more questions than answers at the end of the play. To some this is unsettling and feels unfinished, to others it is a call for deeper inquiry and reflection.

Once the play was finished, the actors and facilitators joined the participants in a dialogue focused on each individual's experience of the theatre production. This led to identifying new knowledge and insights related to program themes and links to personal and professional life - an advance towards a greater awareness of Lifeworld Sensibility. This process included surfacing of internal thoughts, feelings and insights into a larger community and context creating a continuous praxis.

Within the structure of *Mid-Course Conversations*, a number of unique theatre principles and practices were utilized in the design and implementation of the experience. The variety of divergent theatre forms provided for a deepening of participant engagement, enhancement of the learning experience, and in the embodiment of specific key concepts: generative space; casual interdependence; and the dynamics of complexity and chaos in organizational structures.

Animating the concept of Generative Space through Environmental Theatre

A Generative Space, as an episodic environment (temporal, conceptual, social, psychological, and physical), is purposefully constructed for the purpose of generating, originating, producing and reproducing sensemaking through the processes of collectiveness; emergence; energy; ethicality; and meaning-making. (Woodward 2004). One of the critical roles of Hermenauts is to establish and maintain this space within an organizational context.

Richard Schechner's use of theatrical space through what he calls Environmental Theatre provides valuable insight for understanding and experiencing psychogeographic conditions and ecological dynamics necessary to create and maintain a generative space. In *Six Axioms for Environmental Theatre* (1967, Rev. 1987) Schechner outlines key principles for breaking down traditional theatrical conventions. Several components of *Mid-Course Conversations* were developed and staged according to his theory of Environmental Theatre, in particular that theatrical events involve sets of related transactions and take place in space, either one that is totally transformed or one that is found. Incorporating elements of Schechner's theory of Environmental Theatre in the play proved extremely valuable not only as guidelines for creating and staging the production, but also as an effective tool for animating the concept of generative space, and enriching the aesthetic learning experience. More importantly, however, Schechner's emphasis on the interconnectedness of the many elements of the "performance environment" as alive, rather than static, brings into the theatre experience an awareness of ecological dynamics. In Schechner's words, "An environmental performance is one in which all the elements or parts making up the performance are recognized as alive. To 'be alive' is to change, develop, transform; to have needs and desires; even, potentially, to acquire, express, and use consciousness" (Poor, Living and Environmental Theatre). Thus, if artistic processes provide the interior work, the concept of 'ecology' and the principles involved provide a way for viewing the leader in a global context. Ecology, in the most general sense, is a family of interconnections. It is the nature and dynamics of these interconnections that provides the context for the outer work of the Hermenaut (Woodward and Funk 2004).

Animating Causal Interdependence through Invisible Theatre

No approach to meaning-making can be complete without an awareness and understanding of causal interdependence, the notion that in some way everything affects everything else. Unlike being a participant in the play, we are not conveniently handed a map in life outlining the connections and interconnections with others. The cause and effect of our actions and reactions in daily life are highly complex and mainly invisible to us. As a means to demonstrate and reinforce the importance of cultivating a greater awareness and capacity for paying attention to the dynamics of causal interdependence, the actors in the play created a number of opportunities designed to draw in the participants as well as innocent bystanders into their scenes, thus blurring the line between performance and reality through enacting in an "Invisible Theatre" of sorts.

Invisible Theatre, often associated with theatre practitioner and theorist Augusto Boal has been defined as

a rehearsed sequence of events that is enacted in a public, non-theatrical space, capturing the attention of people who do not know they are watching a planned

performance. It is at once theatre and real life, for although rehearsed, it happens in real time and space and the “actors:” must take responsibility for the consequences of the “show.” The goal is to bring attention to a social problem for the purpose of stimulating public dialogue. (Schutzman and Cohen-Cruz 1994:237)

As the participants followed individual characters in the play from one scene to the next across campus, small and large numbers of external spectators begin to gather, intrigued by the action and in many cases the raw emotion on display emanating from the characters. As a result, the participant ceased to become only spectator, but had also (from the external audience and passerby’s perspective) become part-character in a “real” live scene. The causal interdependence of audience/performer was further deepened by the fact that the longer the external audience watched, the more influence they had on shaping the behaviors of the participants and the actors. Although the play experience was designed principally for stimulating dialogue for the course participants – this Invisible Theatre component also stimulated conversation for many of the external onlookers who never did realize that they were watching a staged improvisation.

Animating Complexity Theory/Chaos Dynamics through the Theatre of Harold Pinter

Familiarity with famed British playwright Harold Pinter’s work for both the designers and actors of the play experience was instrumental in creating a narrative that was rich in complexity, ambiguities and interrelationships. It is often difficult to comprehend what Pinter’s characters are doing or saying, because the causal connection between motive and behaviour is either ambiguous or non-existent (McTeague 1994). His characters are often positioned to reject cause and effect and appear vacant of any internal motivators. “On the whole I would agree that actors and directors searching for legitimate psychological motivation in my characters would get nowhere fast” (80). Pinter puts forth in his plays a serious challenge to many an actor or director operating in the more traditional theatre where discovering a character’s motivation is a kin to discovering the fountainhead. Pinter is also well known to actors, directors and audiences for the “Pinter Pause”, his creative use and concept of silence.

There are two silences. One when no word is spoken. The other when perhaps a torrent of languages is being employed. This speech is speaking the language locked beneath it. That is its continual reference. The speech we hear is an indication of that which we don’t hear. (83)

A “Pinteresque” approach to animating and portraying characters provided for a wonderful counter-point to the principles of causal interdependence. Organizational Complexity is about having more variables, as well as unknown variables, than can be understood. A number of characters and scenes in Mid-Course Conversations demonstrated the notion that the multitude of narratives and motivations are well beyond what any one person can know or comprehend. Thus, they are beyond cause and effect, yet much of mechanistic thinking that informs traditional leadership practice holds to making sense, as well as decisions, based on knowable cause and effect. Hermenauts must learn to recognize the limitations of cause and effect if they are to navigate complexity effectively.

Conclusion

Leading in today's complex world demands a new kind of leadership. It requires leaders who understand the unpredictability of complex living systems, who are willing to engage in a lifeworld of ambiguity and paradox; who are able to make meaning from subjective narrative knowledge as well as from rational objective knowledge, who are willing to question assumptions and beliefs, and who are able to articulate new meanings to others through new and better stories. Through our work in The Banff Centre's Leadership Learning Lab, we have come to see this type of leader from a hermeneutic perspective, a perspective that sees the

leader as more than just a source of knowledge, but as a maker of meaning. As such, we have come to understand the limitations of our traditional ways of delivering leadership development programs. The stand and deliver methods of the past are no longer sufficient for preparing the kinds of leaders required to navigate the complexities and demands placed on them by today's societies. Leading in the 21st century requires more than information, theories, models or tools, it calls for more than a strong knowledge base; it demands the capacity for ever-expanding insight. "It is the artist in each of us we must now encourage into the world. . . . We must bring our visionary artistic powers into emancipation with our highly trained empirical powers of division and deduction" (Whyte 2001:241). It is the integration of empirical and artistic powers that sets the stage for the development of insight capacity and, as such, creates the basis of the new hermeneutic leadership development curriculum. With this in mind, the Leading in a Complex World program was designed to facilitate the development of hermeneutic leaders and integral leadership through the direct experience of the aesthetic-based processes of story and interactive theatre, which in itself is a form of story. Through engaging in these processes participants develop competency in narrative knowledge, which accelerates the development of insight.

The power of story is that it taps into the individual and collective consciousness to those aspects of life that cannot be known or understood purely through objective methods. Story as narrative knowledge "mediates between cultural norms and unique individual beliefs, desires and hopes. It renders the exceptional comprehensible" (Stacey 2003:77). Story has the power to command emotion, to compel involvement, to organize ideas and experience in ways that allow us to remember and understand; it's the "soul of a culture" (Livo and Rietz 1986:2). Story starts with shared experience for which there is often unshared meaning and "binds us together and makes it possible for us to understand the sense the other has made" (Weick 1995:189). Stories stimulate us to comprehend at a higher level than prior to engaging with them because they "induce an ongoing sense of what other events mean" (Weick 1995:120). As such, "Story is a very powerful tool; it's the most sustainable of communication techniques" (Snowden 2001:31). For it is through story that "we can transcend the experience of daily living and know our selves as more enduring than the little occurrences that mark our individual existences" (Livo and Rietz 1986:4).

Story, in all its forms, then, is the Hermenaut's vehicle for binding people together in a community of shared experience that allows them to continue on together. It is from this perspective that we at the Banff Centre's Leadership Learning Lab see the aesthetic process of storytelling and story creation as an important aspect of integral leadership development and thus a critical component of understanding and successfully navigating organizational complexity.

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