



# SYNCHRONICITY

THE INNER  
PATH OF  
LEADERSHIP

*Introduction by Peter Senge*

JOSEPH JAWORSKI

An Excerpt From

***Synchronicity:  
The Inner Path of Leadership***

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## PREFACE

We've all had those perfect moments, when things come together in an almost unbelievable way, when events that could never be predicted, let alone controlled, remarkably seem to guide us along our path. The closest I've come to finding a word for what happens in these moments is "synchronicity." C. G. Jung's classic, "Synchronicity: An Acausal Connecting Principle," defines synchronicity as "a meaningful coincidence of two or more events, where something other than the probability of chance is involved." In the beautiful flow of these moments, it seems as if we are being helped by hidden hands. I have often had such seemingly accidental experiences, both in business and in my personal life, and have always been highly intrigued by them, wondering how they occurred. Over the years my curiosity has grown, particularly about how these experiences occur *collectively* within a group or team of people. I have come to see this as the most subtle territory of leadership, creating the conditions for "predictable miracles."

My quest to understand synchronicity arose out of a series of events in my life that led me into a process of inner transformation. As a result of this transformation I decided to follow a dream that I had held close to my heart for a number of years. It was the most difficult decision I had ever made, but the day I made it, I crossed a threshold. From that moment on, what happened to me had the most mysterious quality about it. Things began falling into place almost effortlessly, and I began to discover remarkable people who were to provide crucial assistance to me. This lasted for over a year. Then I lost the flow and almost destroyed the dream I had worked so hard to establish. Ultimately I regained the capacity to participate in what I later came to understand as an unfolding creative order.

These experiences led me to search for the meaning behind extraordinary moments in time. Why did so many doors open for me after I crossed the threshold? How did I lose the capacity to create the future I had envisioned? How did I regain that capacity? What principles could be discerned from these experiences? If this dynamic occurs in individuals, why can't it occur collectively in organizations and even societies as well? What qualities of leadership could inspire this dynamic to occur?

I am the first to acknowledge that in attempting to address these questions we are exploring the frontiers of human knowledge, and that whatever is said here is only a beginning. But this is the story of my personal journey in search of the answers to those questions, and of my inner transformation along the way. I invite you to take that journey with me. Along the way, you will meet some of the people who are leading the renaissance now occurring in many disciplines: philosophy, physics, neurobiology, leadership theory, and organizational learning. These people are breaking the boundaries between disparate disciplines and transforming them at their furthest reaches—where for me they all converge, leading to a deeper understanding of how human beings, both individually and collectively, might develop the capacity to see what wants to emerge in this world and thus have the opportunity to shape the future instead of simply responding to the forces at large.

This book is organized in four parts that track the journey Joseph Campbell describes in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Campbell presents a composite picture of the heroic quest, which is an archetype of the change process humans and, I suggest, organizations alike can pass through. Even though this is my story, I don't intend it to be an autobiography. To the contrary, it's intended to be everybody's story; that's why I've referred to my family members—who have played such crucial roles in my own journey—only when it is essential to the story itself. As Campbell pointed out, the hero's journey is the journey of any of us who elect to search for our true destiny. It reflects the inevitable passages we encounter as we discover how to create the future. We hardly have the language to describe the fundamental shift of mind that permits us to participate in this unfolding creative order. A story is the most powerful way, indeed, the *only* way I know to begin.

I have intentionally written this book in a way to embody the journey itself, so that the earlier chapters represent the level of consciousness I experienced at that particular point in time. The best way I know to carry the reader into the journey

itself is to echo for the reader what I was actually experiencing. I struggled with this decision because some of the incidents in the earlier chapters are not very flattering. Yet all of our experiences form an essential part of our developmental path, helping to shape us into what we are in the process of becoming. In that sense, as I look back, I am less judgmental about those earlier days. I encourage you to do likewise as you consider your own journey.

The story begins with “Preparing to Journey,” a description of the inauthentic life and the call to adventure which comes in many ways, both subtle and explicit. It is the call to become what we were meant to become, the call to achieve our vital design. Part Two, “Crossing the Threshold,” describes the moment of decision, when we say “yes” to the call to adventure. If we have truly committed to follow our dream, we will find that a powerful force exists beyond ourselves and our conscious will, a force that helps us along the way, nurturing our quest and transformation. Part Three tells of “The Hero’s Journey,” the inevitable supreme ordeal which tests our commitment to the direction we have taken and offers us the opportunity to learn from our failures. The final section, “The Gift,” describes the story of the quest accomplished and what it has brought both to individuals and to society as a whole. Here I describe the process of transformation on the journey.

Peter Senge’s introduction is designed to be a sort of road map for the reader. Senge is the author of the pathbreaking book, *The Fifth Discipline*, which caused a worldwide groundswell of interest in learning organizations. For the past fifteen years, Senge and a number of his colleagues at MIT have been working to understand how to move organizations along the path of learning. They believe that the essence of a learning organization involves not only the development of new capacities, but also fundamental shifts of mind, individually and collectively—the very shifts that are the subject of this book. Nothing of real substance happens, they say, without this kind of transformation. Given this interest in transformation and how it can be most effectively led, it seemed appropriate to ask Peter to write the introduction. I also had a more personal reason for requesting this of him. As Peter explains in the introduction, he was deeply involved in helping me to write the book, and he was present with me almost the entire time as I made the journey toward wholeness that I describe within these pages.

It only remains for me to tell you about the serious reservations I have had about writing and publishing this book. How could I begin to tell others about the journey

toward personal transformation when I find myself so often caught in my own shortcomings? I found a great deal of comfort in reading Henri J. M. Nouwen's book *Reaching Out*. Nouwen said that for a long time he hesitated to write that book, but that he had found consolation and encouragement in the words of seventh-century ascetic, John of the Ladder:

If some are still dominated by their former bad habits, and yet can teach by mere words, let them teach. . . . For perhaps, by being put to shame by their own words, they will eventually begin to practice what they teach.

I hope that this book will serve you in your own personal transformation and that you will come to an even deeper understanding than is revealed here of how these predictable miracles might occur in your life, in the leadership of your organization, and in society as a whole.

Joseph Jaworski  
Hamilton, Massachusetts  
February 1996



# INTRODUCTION

*by Peter Senge*

## TELLING A STORY

For many years I have told people that although there are a lot of books on leadership, there is only one that serious students have to read—*Servant Leadership* by Robert K. Greenleaf. Most recent books on leadership have been about what leaders do and how they operate, why the world makes life difficult for them, and what organizations must do in order to better develop leaders. These books are packed with seemingly practical advice about what individuals and organizations should do differently. Yet few penetrate to deeper insights into the nature of real leadership. By contrast, Greenleaf invites people to consider a domain of leadership grounded in a state of being, not doing. He says that the first and most important choice a leader makes is the choice to serve, without which one's capacity to lead is profoundly limited. That choice is not an action in the normal sense—it's not something you do, but an expression of your being.

This, too, is a book that anyone who is serious about leadership will have to read. *Synchronicity* builds directly on Greenleaf's thinking and goes further, especially in illuminating the nature of the choice to lead and the deep understanding or world view out of which such a choice might arise.

For Greenleaf, being a leader has to do with the relationship between the leader and the led. *Only* when the choice to serve undergirds the moral formation of leaders does the hierarchical power that separates the leader and those led not corrupt. Hierarchies are not inherently bad, despite the bad press they receive today.

The potential of hierarchy to corrupt would be dissolved, according to Greenleaf, if leaders chose to serve those they led—if they saw their job, their fundamental reason for being, as true service. For this idea we owe Greenleaf a great debt. His insights also go a long way toward explaining the “leaderlessness” of most contemporary institutions, guided as they are by people who have risen to positions of authority because of technical or decision-making skills, political savvy, or desire for wealth and power.

Joe Jaworski takes Greenleaf’s understanding further. He suggests that the fundamental choice that enables true leadership in all situations (including, but not limited to, hierarchical leadership) is the *choice to serve life*. He suggests that in a deep sense, my capacity as a leader comes from my choice to allow life to unfold through me. This choice results in a type of leadership that we’ve known very rarely, or that we associate exclusively with extraordinary individuals like Gandhi or King. In fact, this domain of leadership is available to us all, and may indeed be crucial for our future.

I believe this broadening of Greenleaf’s original insight is so relevant today for two reasons. First, Joe’s book shifts the conversation beyond formal power hierarchies of “leaders” and “those led.” Increasingly, hierarchies are weakening, and institutions of all sorts, from multinational corporations to school systems, work through informal networks and self-managed teams that form, operate, dissolve, and re-form. It is not enough simply to choose to serve those you are formally leading, because you may not have any formal subordinates in the new organizational structures. Second, Joe’s book redirects our attention toward how we collectively shape our destiny.

In the West we tend to think of leadership as a quality that exists in certain people. This usual way of thinking has many traps. We search for special individuals with leadership potential, rather than developing the leadership potential in everyone. We are easily distracted by what this or that leader is doing, by the melodrama of people in power trying to maintain their power and others trying to wrest it from them. When things are going poorly, we blame the situation on incompetent leaders, thereby avoiding any personal responsibility. When things become desperate, we can easily find ourselves waiting for a great leader to rescue us. Through all of this, we totally miss the bigger question: “What are we, collectively, able to create?”

Because of our obsessions with how leaders behave and with the interactions of leaders and followers, we forget that in its essence, leadership is about learning how to shape the future. Leadership exists when people are no longer victims of circumstances but participate in creating new circumstances. When people operate in this domain of generative leadership, day by day, they come to a deepening understanding of, as Joe says, “how the universe actually works.” That is the real gift of leadership. It’s not about positional power; it’s not about accomplishments; it’s ultimately not even about what we do. Leadership is about creating a domain in which human beings continually deepen their understanding of reality and become more capable of participating in the unfolding of the world. Ultimately, leadership is about creating new realities.

Exploring such a view of leadership through a book is almost a contradiction in terms. Because this territory can’t be fully understood conceptually, any attempt to digest and explain it intellectually is at best a type of map. And the map is not the territory. To understand the territory, we must earn the understanding, and this understanding doesn’t come cheaply. We all earn it in our life experience. I think this is one part of what Buddhists mean by “life is suffering.” We have to suffer through life, not in the sense of pain, but in terms of living through it.

One way “to live into” these subtle territories of leadership is through a story. When Greenleaf wrote *Servant Leadership*, he “entered” through Hermann Hesse’s *Journey to the East*, an autobiographical account of one man’s journey in search of enlightenment. Along the way, the narrator’s loyal servant, Leo, sustains him through many trials. Years later, when the man finds the esoteric society he is seeking, he discovers that Leo is its leader—so the servant is the leader, and leadership is exercised through service.

Here also Joe enters through a story: his own. The result is an unusual book—rare among leadership books and rare among business books—a personal, reflective account of one person’s journey. This may present some difficulties for readers used to “expert” accounts of leadership which give advice and propound theories. Yet Joe’s insights about leadership and the process by which he came to those insights are inseparable. His life has been his vehicle for learning, just as his learning has been about how leaders must serve life.

Furthermore, this is not just Joe’s story, for Joe’s personal story is interwoven with epochal events in which we all participated. This story begins when his father, Leon

Jaworski, became the Watergate Special Prosecutor. During the investigation, Colonel Jaworski became deeply disturbed by the growing evidence implicating Nixon and his closest aides in the Watergate conspiracy. The only person he felt he could talk to without fear of compromising the investigation was his son Joe, also a lawyer. Father and son asked each other the same questions the nation would soon ask: How could this have happened? How could we have come to this—our highest and most trusted officials acting like common criminals?

Living with these questions eventually led Joe to a remarkable series of undertakings. After several years of wrestling with his calling, he decided to leave the prestigious international law firm he had helped build. He struck off into completely foreign territory—public leadership—and created the American Leadership Forum (ALF). The vision of ALF was to establish a national network of talented and diverse midcareer professionals committed to bringing forth a new generation of public leadership. Today, ALF programs operate in a number of communities and regions in the United States with successful results. After almost ten years, Joe stepped down as Chairman of ALF and accepted the position as head of the scenario planning process for the Royal Dutch Shell Group of companies. In this job, he helped shape what many regard as the premier planning process of any large corporation.

For me, Joe's story represents one person's journey taken on behalf of all of us who are wrestling with the profound changes required in public and institutional leadership for the twenty-first century. Our lifelong experiences with hierarchy cast a long shadow, making it difficult for us to think outside the framework of hierarchical leadership. Abuses of hierarchical authority like Watergate, sadly, are still with us today, eliciting deep concerns about our collective capability to lead ourselves. The ALF saga shows what a small group of committed people can do to positively affect public leadership.

Especially interesting for me is the juxtaposition of the ALF and Shell experiences. Joe's years at Shell provide a unique inside look at how Shell's planning process operates, including the first public presentation of the two long-term global scenarios that are now guiding thinking among Shell managers worldwide. Large multinational corporations like Shell represent a new form of social system in the world, with immense power, for good or ill, to influence the future. Today, the global

corporation transcends national boundaries and has an impact in the world that goes beyond even that of governments. In this book, we begin to get a glimpse of how this power might positively influence the future. In particular, we see how the scenario process can nurture creative new ways of thinking about and influencing the future both within and beyond the corporation itself.

## MEETINGS WITH REMARKABLE PEOPLE

My contact with this book also begins with a story. It was autumn, 1992, and I was in London on the way home from a European trip. I was meeting Joe for breakfast, having not seen him for some five years. In the meantime, he had left ALF, where I had helped in the early start-up period from 1980 to 1983, and he had already been working for Shell for two years. Coincidentally, I had known two of his predecessors in the position, Pierre Wack and Peter Schwartz, as well as Arie de Geus, the former head of all planning for Shell, and had some idea of the extraordinary nature of the job Joe now held. So I was eager to see my old friend and get caught up on his activities.

As he told me about the exciting work of developing Shell's new global scenarios, I became increasingly engaged. Then he told me about the book he was writing. In many ways Joe is a shy person, so writing a book about his life does not come easily. Yet he felt his story contained important lessons that could be shared only through a book. On the one hand, there were the fascinating stories of ALF, and now Shell. But on the other, below the surface detail of these activities, were the profound personal changes Joe had gone through, guided by a series of meetings with remarkable people such as John Gardner, Harlan Cleveland, and some of the leading scientists of our time. I was stunned when Joe told me about meeting the physicist David Bohm in 1980, a meeting I had never known about. As time had passed, Joe had come to realize that this meeting was pivotal, and that the conversation with Bohm had planted seeds within him that had taken years to develop and that now were leading him to a radically new view of how human beings could shape their destiny. When our breakfast ended, I told Joe I would do anything I could to help him finish this book.

I, too, had had a pivotal meeting with David Bohm. It was in 1989, as I was in the very final stages of writing *The Fifth Discipline*. David gave a small seminar at

MIT for a group of us interested in his work on dialogue. At the time, I was searching desperately for a deeper theoretical understanding of a particular phenomenon I had observed in teams, which I felt was essential to understand the discipline of team learning. Over the years my colleagues and I had come to use the term “alignment” to describe what happens when people in a group actually start to function as a whole. We would use examples like extraordinary jazz ensembles and championship basketball teams to evoke a sense of what alignment was all about. But I knew at a deeper level I could not begin to explain how this mysterious functioning as a whole actually came about.

I also knew that what I was looking for was not available in mainstream contemporary management theories about teams. Many of these theories are essentially individualistic in nature, grounded in individual psychology or the psychology of groups. I felt deeply that this phenomenon of alignment was not individualistic at all, but fundamentally collective. I knew of no theory that in any way started to explain how the seemingly mysterious state of “being in the groove” (as the jazz musicians call it) or “in the zone” actually works. Theories based on individual reasoning, interpersonal interactions, or behavior patterns in groups seemed inherently inadequate.

In the seminar, as Bohm described his work on dialogue, I said to myself, “At least now I know I’m not crazy.” Bohm talked about the phenomenon of thought and how our patterns of thought can hold us captive. “Thought creates the world and then says ‘I didn’t do it,’” he said. He talked about a “generative order” in which, depending on our state of consciousness, we “participate in how reality unfolds.” Bohm’s theory went beyond interdependence to wholeness. Interdependence is something you can see. For example, a mother and a child are interdependent in countless ways you can observe. Such interdependence is a sort of window into a deeper domain of wholeness. Interdependence exists at what Bohm called the “explicate” level. But wholeness exists at the “implicate,” which is the unmanifest or premanifest level. When we are engaged in something that is deeply meaningful and are attuned to one another, human beings can participate in the “unfolding” of the implicate wholeness into the manifest or explicate order.

Now, this conversation in 1989 with David Bohm was a sort of seed planting for me as well. I knew I only dimly grasped what Bohm was saying, parts of which resonated deeply with me. Other parts seemed strange, foreign to any way I had

been trained to think. Over the years, reading and rereading *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*, where Bohm lays out the basic theory, had helped. But when Joe started to tell me that morning about his conversation with Bohm, I realized that here was a very special gift. Later, when Joe showed me the transcript of the conversation (he somehow had had the presence of mind to tape the meeting), I was struck by the simplicity and clarity of Bohm's way of explaining his thinking to Joe. In many ways, the personal nature of Joe's questions seemed to allow David to speak personally as well. Having studied his work, I can say that there are subtleties to David's thinking that I only began to understand through Joe's meeting with him. I realized that, in a sense, Joe and the story he was and is living out had the potential to become a vehicle for communicating David's seminal insights to a much bigger audience than he would ever reach with his own writings.

Perhaps in some way David and the other leading thinkers with whom Joe met sensed this as well. Otherwise, it is hard to understand how these meetings even would have occurred. By the time Joe met him in 1980, Bohm was already a famous physicist. Einstein had once said that Bohm was the one person from whom he ever understood quantum theory. Bohm had written the leading textbook on quantum theory in the early 1950s. Why would this man, who was quite reserved and protective of his privacy, agree, on one day's notice, to spend the next afternoon with a strange American lawyer who had just called him on the telephone?

The answer lies in part in Joe's personal qualities, which somehow make it possible for people to open up to him. Joe has less investment in appearing to understand things than almost anybody I know. He'll often say, "You know, I don't think I really understand it," or, "I'm not sure if I'm doing it justice." To have accomplished what he's accomplished, and to have the kind of fame that he inherited from his father, and still to have retained that childlike quality of being able to wonder, is really extraordinary. I've never met anybody who's as good at wondering as Joe is. Perhaps this is one reason people are so open around him.

Another less obvious reason is that people like Bohm probably had a sense that it was important to talk to Joe. They felt they should spend time with him. There is a sense of destiny that travels with Joe. It's a very subtle phenomenon to describe because many people have lofty goals, and many people have a sense of self-importance. Joe has absolutely none of that. The sense of destiny I experience around Joe is actually *around* him, not *in* him. It's not in his personality. If Joe says,

“This is really important,” it’s because that’s the reality he’s seeing, not because he’s expressing an opinion. Little of him blocks what’s going on around him.

I’ve come to appreciate that one of the gifts of artists is the ability to see the world as it really is. The vision of what painters or sculptors intend to create is critical, but it is of little use if they cannot accurately observe the current state of their creation. Most of us aren’t very good at perceiving reality as it is. Most of what we “see” is shaped by our impressions, our history, our baggage, our preconceptions. We can’t see people as they really are because we’re too busy reacting to our own internal experiences of what they evoke in us, so we rarely actually relate to reality. We mostly relate to internal remembrances of our own history, stimulated and evoked by whatever is externally before us.

Somehow Joe has a more direct relationship with things than most of us, and I think this is what sensitive people see in him. It’s not just that Joe is a good listener, or a good questioner, or a childlike learner. I think people such as David Bohm have the feeling that by telling Joe their story, their story will actually be *heard*. A type of fidelity emerges from this. Joe tells his story, but our experience of it is much more like looking through a window than watching a movie. We don’t just hear his memories, we look through his experiences at something that was actually there. And when we can see what is true, something new can show up. I think this is why people like David Bohm and the biologist Francisco Varela, who have come to understand what it means to operate clearly in the moment, believe they must spend time with this person.

I share these impressions of how Joe works not to flatter him but, I hope, to help you appreciate at a more personal level what this story is all about. If we could only see reality more as it is, it would become obvious what we need to do. We wouldn’t be acting out of our own histories, or our own needs, or our own purely reactive interpretations. We would see what is needed in the moment. We would do exactly what’s required of us, right now, right here. This is precisely what David Bohm was talking about when he spoke of living one’s life by “participating in the unfolding.” You can’t do that unless you can actually see what is right before you. In this way, Joe’s story is a beautiful demonstration of the personal orientation required for a learning organization to operate.

Moving as it does between historic public events and key intellectual developments, Joe’s story naturally draws us in. We are all seeking greater insight into



these remarkable times, when there is so much cause for both despair and hope. Even though our political and institutional leadership is losing respect and credibility, and core societal crises fester, we are gaining a greater understanding of how the universe works. An historic shift in the Western scientific-materialistic world view is occurring. Perhaps the two are connected. Perhaps our institutions and leadership are, by and large, grounded in a way of thinking about the world that is increasingly obsolete and counterproductive. Perhaps that is why they are falling apart.

The new leadership must be grounded in fundamentally new understandings of how the world works. The sixteenth-century Newtonian mechanical view of the universe, which still guides our thinking, has become increasingly dysfunctional in these times of interdependence and change. The critical shifts required to guarantee a healthy world for our children and our children's children will not be achieved by doing more of the same. "The world we have created is a product of our way of thinking," said Einstein. Nothing will change in the future without fundamentally new ways of thinking. This is the real work of leadership. And this book is a good place to begin the work.

## FUNDAMENTAL SHIFTS OF MIND

As the book was nearing completion, the story implicit in Joe's experiences began to emerge with so much coherence that it seemed to just tell itself. Through a series of working sessions with Joe and Betty Sue Flowers, Joe's editor, we'd find, again and again, whenever something was unclear, we'd simply ask Joe, "Well, tell us what actually happened," and he would. As we listened, we'd shake our heads and say, "Well, just write it that way." Eventually, the whole process began to resemble a sort of personal archeology as Betty Sue and I would simply guide Joe in sharing his first-hand experience.

Then I began to feel that we needed to step back from the story and reflect more broadly on the whole journey. At one level, the larger purpose of the book was to suggest that we can shape our future in ways that we rarely realize. What made Joe's story so compelling was that it offered an emerging understanding of how this might come about.

One afternoon I asked Joe, "What are the guiding principles, or the organizing principles, with which this book is concerned?" Almost without hesitation, he

responded by describing certain necessary shifts of mind and the consequences of these shifts. He acknowledged that this was all very new to him and that these ideas should be treated as preliminary insights, initial glimpses into a vast new territory. Nonetheless, I think they will be helpful, especially for those readers who would like a conceptual road map before embarking on Joe's journey.

First, Joe said, we need to be open to *fundamental shifts of mind*. We have very deep mental models of how the world works, deeper than we can know. To think that the world can ever change without changes in our mental models is folly. When I asked Joe more specifically what these changes might be about, he said that *it's about a shift from seeing a world made up of things to seeing a world that's open and primarily made up of relationships*, where whatever is manifest, whatever we see, touch, feel, taste, and hear, whatever seems most real to us, is actually nonsubstantial. A deeper level of reality exists beyond anything we can articulate.

Once we understand this, we begin to see that the future is not fixed, that *we live in a world of possibilities*. And yet almost all of us carry around a deep sense of resignation. We're resigned to believing we can't have any influence in the world, at least not on a scale that matters. So we focus on the small scale, where we think we can have an influence. We do our best with our kids, or we work on our relationships, or we focus on building a career. But deep down, we're resigned to being absolutely powerless in the larger world. Yet if we have a world of people who all feel powerless, we have a future that's predetermined. So we live in hopelessness and helplessness, a state of great despair. And this despair is actually a product of how we think, a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy.

For the most part, this despair is undiscussable, especially among successful people. We don't want to talk about it, because we want to maintain a facade of having our lives together. So we create all kinds of diversions. Our culture itself offers abundant diversions. It tells us that all we need to worry about is how we look. Work out, get the body in shape, dress well. Life is about appearances. Diversions also exist in the story we tell about the world—that the world is dominated by politics and self-interest, for example. All these diversions are simply ways of covering up the deeper sense of despair arising from our feeling that we can do nothing about the future.

But when we go through this shift of mind, we begin to realize that the sense of despair we've been feeling arises out of a fundamentally naive view of the world. In

fact, absolutely everything around us is in continual motion. There's nothing in nature that stays put. When I look at the leaves on the tree, I am really seeing a flowing of life. Those leaves won't be on that tree in a couple of months. At this very moment, they're changing. Before long, they'll be a different color. Before long, they'll be lying on the ground. Before long, they'll be part of the soil. Before long, they'll be part of another tree. There's absolutely nothing in nature that stays put.

One of the great mysteries of our current state of consciousness is how we can live in a world where absolutely nothing is fixed, and yet perceive a world of "fixedness." But once we start to see reality more as it is, we realize that nothing is permanent, so how could the future be fixed? How could we live in anything but a world of continual possibility? This realization allows us to feel more alive. People like David Bohm and the management expert W. Edwards Deming had just such vitality. Where did they get it? Perhaps they had less of their consciousness tied up in maintaining the illusion of fixity, so they had a little more life left in them. Because of how we think, we're strangling the life out of ourselves. When we start to see the world more as it is, we stop strangling ourselves.

That afternoon when we talked, Joe said, "*When this fundamental shift of mind occurs, our sense of identity shifts, too, and we begin to accept each other as legitimate human beings.*" I've only just now reached a point in my life where I can begin to appreciate what it would actually mean to accept one another as legitimate human beings. Part of that ironclad grip on ourselves which maintains the illusion of fixity involves seeing our own selves and each other as fixed. I don't see you; I see the stored-up images, interpretations, feelings, doubts, distrusts, likes, and dislikes that you evoke in me. When we actually begin to accept one another as legitimate human beings, it's truly amazing.

Perhaps this is what love means. Virtually all the world's religions have, in one way or another, recognized the power of love, this quality of seeing one another as legitimate human beings.

"Then," Joe said, "*when we start to accept this fundamental shift of mind, we begin to see ourselves as part of the unfolding. We also see that it's actually impossible for our lives not to have meaning.*" The only way I can experience my life as meaningless is to work as hard as I possibly can to tell myself it has no meaning. At a deeper level of reality, my life can't help but have meaning, because everything is continually unfolding, and I am connected into that unfolding in ways that I can't even

imagine. It takes no effort of will, no particular skill, no learning, no knowledge. It is actually my birthright. It's what it means to be alive. Robert Frost said that home is that place you shouldn't have to earn. We don't have to earn this type of meaningfulness in our lives. It is already present.

Joe said, "*Operating in this different state of mind and being, we come to a very different sense of what it means to be committed.*" In our traditional image of commitment, things get done by hard work. We have to sacrifice. If everything starts to fall apart, we try harder, or we tell ourselves that we're not good enough, or that we don't care enough to be that committed. So we vacillate between two states of being, one a form of self-manipulation, wherein we get things done by telling ourselves that if we don't work harder, it won't get done; and the other a state of guilt, wherein we say we're not good enough. Neither of these states of being has anything to do with the deeper nature of commitment.

When we operate in the state of mind in which we realize we are part of the unfolding, we can't *not* be committed. It's actually impossible not to be committed. Nothing ever happens by accident. Every single thing is part of what needs to happen right now. We only make the mistakes that we have to make to learn what we're here to learn right now. This is a commitment of being, not a commitment of doing. We discover that our being is inherently in a state of commitment as part of the unfolding process. The only way to be uncommitted is to lose that realization, to once again fall into the illusion that we aren't participating in life. This discovery leads to a paradoxical *integrity of surrender*, surrendering into commitment: I actualize my commitment by listening, out of which my "doing" arises. Sometimes the greatest acts of commitment involve doing nothing but sitting and waiting until I just know what to do next.

In most of our organizations today, managers who adopt this attitude would be considered nonmanagers because they are not doing anything to fix problems. We're hooked on the notion that commitment and activity are inseparable. So we create a continual stream of activity, making sure that everybody sees us doing lots of things so they'll believe we're actually committed. If we stay busy enough, maybe we'll even convince ourselves that our lives have some meaning even though, deep down, we know they couldn't possibly have any meaning, because everything is hopeless, and we're helpless, and we couldn't possibly affect anything anyhow.

One of the interesting indicators of this paradoxical connection between our sense of helplessness and our ceaseless activity is how much difficulty we have actually saying, “You know, I can’t do anything about that.” We often find that people in organizations have to create a belief that they can make change happen in order to justify their meaningless activity. So they’re caught in an enormous set of contradictions. At one level, they believe they can’t influence anything. At another level, they create a story that says, “We can make it happen,” and they busy themselves doing things that they know won’t have any impact. It’s like rats on a treadmill; they get tired after a while. Recently a very successful manager told me that she had suddenly realized that all her life she had just been treading water. We live in a contradictory state of frenzied commitment, of treading water, knowing we’re actually not going any place. But we’re terrified that if we stop, we’ll drown. Our lives will be meaningless.

*When this new type of commitment starts to operate, there is a flow around us. Things just seem to happen.* We begin to see that with very small movements, at just the right time and place, all sorts of consequent actions are brought into being. We develop what artists refer to as an “economy of means,” where, rather than getting things done through effort and brute force, we start to operate very subtly. A flow of meaning begins to operate around us, as if we were part of a larger conversation. This is the ancient meaning of dialogue: (*dia • logos*) “flow of meaning.” We start to notice that things suddenly are just attracted to us in ways that are very puzzling. A structure of underlying causes, a set of forces, begins to operate, as if we were surrounded by a magnetic field with magnets being aligned spontaneously in this field. But this alignment is not spontaneous at all—it’s just that the magnets are responding to a more subtle level of causality.

When we started the MIT Center for Organizational Learning a few years ago, a most remarkable thing began to happen. People just started showing up. In one period of about two or three months, three incredible women showed up. I had met them eleven years before at a particular meeting, and I had begun to think about them again because the work they were doing connected in important ways to new developments at the Center. But I didn’t know how to reach any of them, or even where they lived. Within two months, each of them had called and said she had learned about what we were doing and wanted to see how she could help.

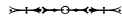
The causes of such incidents are very hard for us to understand, but it appears that when we start to operate in this new state of mind, grounded in this different commitment, something starts to operate around us. You could call it “attraction”—the attractiveness of people in a state of surrender.

Lastly, *when we are in a state of commitment and surrender, we begin to experience what is sometimes called “synchronicity.”* In other words, synchronicity is a result. It’s important to understand the underlying causes of synchronicity, because if we don’t, we might actually try to bring about synchronicity in the same way we try to control the rest of our lives. People tend to elevate synchronicity into a sort of magical, mystical experience. In fact, it’s very down to earth. Water flows downhill because of gravity. Of course, gravity itself is a pretty mysterious phenomenon. It seems to be a type of field, as if all physical objects in the universe have some attraction for one another. But even though no one knows exactly how gravity works, we can observe the result: water flows downhill. We don’t argue about the result because it is observable. That’s much the way synchronicity seems to operate in this field of deep commitment.

In the same sense, this attractiveness, the field that starts to develop around people who have experienced these shifts of mind, creates a phenomenon that Joe calls predictable miracles. “Miracle” is a funny word because it connotes the unusual or mysterious. But in fact, what is “miraculous” might be just what is beyond our current understanding and way of living. If we were not making such an immense effort to separate ourselves from life, we might actually live life day to day, minute by minute, as a series of predictable miracles.

## PART ONE

# PREPARING TO JOURNEY



WHATEVER YOU CAN DO, OR DREAM YOU CAN, BEGIN IT.

BOLDNESS HAS GENIUS, POWER, AND MAGIC IN IT.

—Goethe

## 1. WATERGATE

It was October 1973, and I was thirty-nine years old. Watergate had broken out in September of the previous year. I was in the midst of living “the good life,” and although I had been following the news accounts of the Watergate affair fairly closely, it was more background noise than anything else. My attention was focused on practicing law in Houston, Texas, building an international law firm, and managing my business affairs.

The Senate Watergate Committee was in full operation, and John Dean, the President’s counsel, had testified that President Nixon knew of the Watergate cover-up as early as September 1972. There was also testimony that John Ehrlichman, one of the President’s closest advisors, had approved cash payments to the Watergate burglars. The Committee had heard testimony to the effect that the President had installed a voice-activated taping system in the Oval Office, which had recorded all conversations taking place there without the visitor’s knowledge or consent.

Nixon’s two closest associates, Ehrlichman and H. R. Haldeman, had resigned. John Dean had been fired. Archibald Cox, the Watergate Special Prosecutor, had subpoenaed tape recordings from the White House that were relevant to the case, and subsequently was fired as Special Prosecutor on orders from President Nixon. Attorney General Elliot Richardson, who had selected Cox for the job, refused to comply with Nixon’s orders and resigned. His deputy, William French Smith, likewise refused to fire Cox, and was discharged. Solicitor General Robert Bork, next in the line of succession, was appointed acting Attorney General and removed Cox from office.

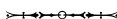
This series of events was dubbed by the press as the “Saturday Night Massacre.” By this time, like most Americans, I had become deeply alarmed, and I felt that there must be much more to this than had already surfaced.



In late October, General Alexander Haig, Nixon's Chief of Staff, telephoned my father, Leon Jaworski, and said he wanted to discuss his taking the Special Prosecutor's job. My father flew to Washington the next morning. Public reaction to the Saturday Night Massacre apparently had been much more violent than the White House had anticipated. Congress was considering creating a separate Special Prosecutor's Office outside the President's control.

In that meeting, Haig urged my father to take the job. "The situation in this country is almost revolutionary. Things are about to come apart. The only hope of stabilizing the situation is for the President to be able to announce that someone in whom the country has confidence has agreed to serve." My father agreed to take the job only if he was assured that he would be able to pursue the investigation with complete independence, and that he would have the right to take the President to court if necessary.

During the following months, my father was to discover the frightening dimensions of the Watergate conspiracy, and he was to share those with me, in confidence, as he learned of them. This was a life-changing experience for me.



It was Halloween night when my father returned home from the meeting with General Haig. News of his acceptance had leaked out in Washington, so media representatives had assembled at the house. Most members of our family had gathered there, and the air felt electric with excitement.

But later that night, I went for a long walk alone. I thought of the sacrifice my father was about to make. He was sixty-eight years old, in the process of retiring. I worried about his health, and the enormous stress he would be experiencing in the coming months. Most people knew him as a member of the establishment, the senior partner of one of the most powerful law firms in the country, and one of the best litigators in the United States.

I knew him quite differently. I knew him as the son of a Polish immigrant and as a rare and great American—a modest, almost self-conscious man, who held a deep belief that when we are called, we must serve. He abhorred being in the limelight. In the midst of pressure and controversy, he sought simple pleasures, working close to the earth, spending a lot of time gardening. He raised beautiful azaleas and camellias which he loved to photograph.

When I was young, every evening I would ride my bicycle to the bus stop to meet my father, and then we would walk back home together to our big white house. Many times after dinner, he would take the car and go back to the office, particularly when he was in trial, which seemed to be almost all the time. But there was plenty of time for the children: playing in the parks together, tossing the baseball on weekends, playing at the beach, fishing. On Sunday mornings, he would put all three of us on his lap and read the funny papers to us. He was a wonderful father. Then World War II came and it all changed.

One afternoon, I was playing outside when all of a sudden my father showed up. It was much earlier than he normally came home. I followed him into the house where my mother was polishing furniture and doing some general housework. She looked up and said, "Well, Mr. Jaworski, what are you doing home this time of day?"

And my father replied, "Captain Jaworski to you, my dear." I remember the look of dismay on my mother's face. From that moment on, our lives would never be the same.

We didn't see much of our father after that. While he was overseas, it was really rough on my mother. She would wait for his letters, and when they came, we would all crowd around her in the living room. We would stand very close to our mother while she would try to read the letters to us without crying. She never made it. We would all clutch her and hold her tight while she was crying, sometimes uncontrollably, as she read.

When my father came back from Europe, he was an altogether different person. We went to the train station to meet him, and the first thing I noticed was that he was chain-smoking cigarettes. He hadn't smoked cigarettes before. When we got home, what I remember more clearly than anything else over the next few days was that he was cursing: "damn" and "hell" and "son of a bitch." I'd never heard him use those words before. There was an edge to him, a harshness. He didn't care much about the flowers. He seemed nervous and began working very hard almost immediately.

Later, when I was older, he told me that many of his friends and partners had stayed home and not gone to the war. They had made a lot of money in the meantime, while we were in pretty pressed financial shape because of his war-time pay. He had a lot of catching up to do, so he began dedicating himself to that. It was pretty much that way from then on for as long as I can remember. All of his partners and young associates at the firm referred to him as "the Colonel," and I began doing so also. As I look back at it, this seemed to mark the change in our relationship.

During the first week when he was back, he insisted that I take boxing lessons. I didn't want to take boxing lessons, and when I told him so, he shamed me for being afraid. He seemed to be very disappointed in me, which hurt. This was the first of a series of events that reflected the kind of relationship I had with the Colonel from that point forward. I was an unself-conscious, silly, but sensitive and vulnerable boy, full of wonder and imagination and open to all possibilities. I was always trying to get his attention, trying to get him to accept me for what I was and what I wanted to be. It was a struggle that lasted for years and years. In the long run, I became fiercely independent, and so opposed to anyone controlling me that I think I went overboard with it.

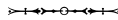
Maybe that's why for years I was so wild. Even before the fifth grade, I was always organizing mischief. I would get my older sister to help me put big rocks on the railroad track to see what would happen. Another time, I set fire to a field, not intentionally, but I was playing with fire. The fire could have burned up a whole block of houses if the fire department hadn't handled it promptly. When I was in fourth grade, I found some mules grazing in a field, and I thought it would really be funny to turn them loose in my school building, so I did. At thirteen, I would sneak out of the house and roll the Colonel's car down the driveway, very quietly, and then go out driving for a couple of hours, coming back just before daybreak, when the Colonel would get up and go to work. At sixteen, I took his pickup truck and drove to Mexico for a week with a couple of my buddies.



When my father went to Washington to take over the job as the Watergate Prosecutor, he didn't know whom in his office he could really trust. Those early months were tough on him. He was known as the President's man, the lawyer who supposedly could be controlled, the friend of Lyndon Johnson, who knew where power lay and respected it. His staff of seventy-five was composed of young lawyers who were mostly inherited from Cox. My father was hampered by the disaffection of some members of that staff, and like most people under those circumstances, felt a certain degree of self-doubt. We talked over the telephone often during those early days.

In a telephone call just before Christmas, the Colonel's voice was grave. He said he could not talk about things over the telephone, but he wondered if I would be at the family ranch when he could spend a few days there over Christmas.

Our ranch lay between the little village of Wimberly and Austin, Texas, on Ranch Road 12. The Colonel had bought the land in the late 1940s, after he came back from the war, and had paid thirty dollars an acre for it. It was solid cedar and scrub. For those first five years, from the age of fourteen through eighteen, I worked summers and most holidays with the crews who were clearing that land. The Colonel would often join us, and he got tremendous satisfaction out of creating parklike settings from areas so densely covered with scrub and cedar that not even grass could grow. In later years, it became a family affair, almost a ritual, where the Colonel, my brother-in-law, and I would spend weekends at the ranch, getting up early, before the heat became unbearable, to chop cedar, pull dead stumps, and burn the scrub. This was the Colonel's sacred place, where he cleared his mind, and where he got his energy.



After receiving the Colonel's telephone call, I arranged to take a couple of days off to spend at the ranch. On the way up, I thought about how serious he had sounded over the telephone. I was anxious to hear about the developments in Washington over the previous few weeks.

When I got there that evening, the Colonel seemed tired, and we spent the time after dinner just catching up on things in general and talking over the business of the quarter-horse operation at the ranch.

After breakfast the next morning, we loaded up the Jeep with all the necessary paraphernalia—chainsaws, double-edged axes, pickaxes, plenty of cold water, fruit, and a few beers. At about seven-thirty, we struck out for the “boondocks,” as the Colonel called it, and went to work. We cleared cedar without stopping for a couple of hours, and when we took a long break, the Colonel and I sat under a big oak and talked.

It was the same as it had been for twenty years. He always wore the same clothes up there. As my mother put it, “He looked like something the cat drug in.” His baggy pants were stuffed into his Red Wing work boots and held up by a belt that had seen its better days years before. His shirt was a khaki army shirt from his war years, which had the sleeves cut out of it. After working for a few hours, the clothes were soaked with sweat, and there were wood chips, grime, and dirt throughout his hair and eyebrows. As I think about it, I smile. His face looked like a chimney sweep's. But that's when he was the most relaxed, the happiest.

As we squatted down under the tree, the Colonel began to tell me what was on his mind. “Bud, we’ve been listening to the tapes. The President is up to his ears in this thing. I heard the President of the United States, a lawyer who took the same oath that you and I took, suborning perjury like a common criminal. He was telling Haldeman how to testify under oath untruthfully and yet sidestep perjury. Here is the President of the United States, his counsel, and his Chief of Staff—three of the most powerful men in the country, people charged with the highest responsibility in our government—and I heard them talking and plotting against the ends of justice like thugs. Sleazy, third-rate criminals.” His voice was rising, and his eyes were flashing. He got up, went to the Jeep, and pulled out a brown cardboard envelope, which he almost threw down at my feet. “Here—just take a look at this!”

We began leafing through the transcript. The part the Colonel had referred to was the now infamous March 21, 1973, conversation among Nixon, Dean, and Haldeman, and, as my father had told me, contained the portion in which Nixon was coaching Haldeman on how to lie under oath without committing perjury. Their language was a mixture of disjointed phrases, profanities, and obscenities. It was like two guys half-drunk in a back room shooting craps. They talked about getting a million dollars to pay in blackmail money to keep things quiet. What was contained in this transcript was clearly sufficient in my mind to permit a jury to conclude beyond a reasonable doubt that the President had joined a conspiracy. It was clear that Nixon was up to his eyeballs in the entire business.

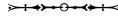
My mind flashed back to the many times I had heard Nixon speak to the American people on television about Watergate, reassuring us that he was not involved, that this whole affair was blown out of proportion. That was the public Nixon. Now I was seeing the private Nixon—the real Richard Nixon. His betrayal of the Constitution and his staggering abuse of power made me sick to my stomach. Revulsion and hate welled up in me. I had a feeling of fear for our entire country, fear that followed the realization that we were being led by a man with so little character. How could someone with such a low moral and ethical base ascend to the highest office of the most powerful nation in the world? How could this happen? Who was responsible? How could we prevent this from ever happening again?

I looked at the Colonel, and I could see that his heart and his soul were aching like mine. He was looking down at the ground, scratching in the dirt with a twig, and then he looked up at me and said, “When I went up there, I never ever

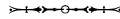
expected to find the President in the middle of this. It never even occurred to me that he was in the driver's seat. The situation is explosive. But you can't breathe a word of this to anyone. It would prejudice the right of others, and eventually Nixon himself, to a fair trial."

I knew this without the Colonel even saying so. I knew he badly needed someone just to confide in—someone whom he trusted, with whom he could share this. He talked of a deep premonition that things were going to get much worse than anyone in Washington ever imagined. And it was on his shoulders to help see the nation through one of the most traumatic events in its history. I reassured him. "Colonel, stay after it. I know you'll continue to do the right thing."

"With God's help," he added.



The hardest thing for me in the weeks and months that followed was to have this knowledge and, at the same time, watch the President lie to the American people on television. It's impossible to describe the feeling of contempt I had as I watched him. I was disillusioned with our political leadership, but I recognized that we all bore some personal responsibility for what was happening in Washington. We were getting what we deserved. I began thinking about the role that ordinary citizens like myself should be playing in the life of our country.



About a month after I met with the Colonel, the Attorney General and his six codefendants appeared in Judge Sirica's court for their arraignment on the Watergate cover-up indictment. They were all charged with one count of conspiracy to obstruct justice. In the Colonel's words, it was "an unparalleled American tragedy . . . an historic moment." There stood the former chief law enforcement officer in the country, the former Assistant to the President, the Special Counsel to the President, an official of the Committee to Re-Elect the President, and the General Counsel to the United States Information Agency. All but one were lawyers—a painful fact, which the Colonel and I talked about many times.

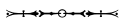
Over the next several months, the Colonel's staff, the media, and the public gained more confidence in him. Talk of Congress appointing its own Special Prosecutor subsided. Sixty-four additional tapes were subpoenaed, including the tape

of June 23, 1972, which proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that not only the Presidential aides, but the President himself had participated in the Watergate cover-up. I was there in July when the Colonel and his team argued their case before the Supreme Court of the United States. Within three weeks, the Court handed down its decision confirming that the “charter” the President had given him as Special Prosecutor did in fact guarantee him the right and the power to take anyone, including the President, to court; that this charter had the effect of law; and that the Supreme Court was the final authority on the law. The Court’s decision was unanimous, and it confirmed that the President, who had been named an unindicted coconspirator in the Watergate cases, had to produce the sixty-four tapes of Watergate conversations. Nixon had tried to get away with turning over a few edited summaries and garbled transcriptions of the tapes, which, as it turned out, were incomplete and riddled with errors.

Within a few weeks, the Colonel had these tapes, which included some conversations between the President and Haldeman on June 23, just six days after the Watergate break-in. On that tape, they talked about using the CIA to get the FBI out of the investigation. Neither Haig nor Nixon’s Chief Counsel, James St. Clair, had known about that particular tape. St. Clair told Nixon to reveal this publicly or he was going to resign. On the afternoon of August 5, the President released his statement, and admitted that the tapes were “at variance” with his previous statements. Now his own transcript showed that he had known of the cover-up, and participated in it, six days after the break-in.

Of this moment, the Colonel would later write, “For me, the revelation was the end of the nightmare. . . . The conclusions I had reached about [Nixon’s] culpability were now confirmed and absolutely clarified. . . . I had walked the streets of Washington knowing that he continually twisted the facts while I, who knew the truth, had to remain silent. The relief I felt is impossible to describe.”

Two days later, on August 7, 1974, Nixon resigned. The rest was a mopping-up operation, and by the end of October, the Colonel had resigned and was on his way back to Houston.



It had been only one year, but what a year it had been. Watergate proved that the American Constitution works, and, as the Colonel put it, “No one—absolutely no one—is above the law.” But the events of that year left a profound personal mark on me, as it did on most Americans who lived through that national tragedy. I wondered whether any sitting president would ever be fully trusted again. Further, I saw this as an issue not just of political leadership, but of institutional leadership in general. I began to consider the self-reinforcing problems confronting us: unscrupulous leaders who abuse the power entrusted to them, and lazy, self-indulgent citizens who, in effect, invite this kind of behavior. I felt deep concern and a real sense of personal responsibility about this state of affairs, but what bothered me even more was my own sense of powerlessness to make lasting change. How could we get a handle on this problem and really make a difference?

The seeds were planted for what would amount to a major change in the way I would spend the balance of my life, but it would be years before I developed the capacity to let those seeds grow.



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