

# NOT KNOWING

THE ART OF TURNING  
UNCERTAINTY  
INTO OPPORTUNITY

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*Based on the writing of  
Zen monk and teacher Shunryu Suzuki*

## 1. BEGINNER'S MIND

A young manager who was very confident in his abilities and who had been promoted to a Vice President role in his company within a year of joining, had an appointment with his Managing Director (MD). He wanted to find out from the MD what it took to rise to the next grade. He was very keen to be promoted again, and soon.

The MD welcomed him into his office and offered the young manager a cup of coffee. Quickly accepting, the young manager started to describe all his achievements and what he knew about the business. He wanted to impress. As the young manager offered his cup to be filled with coffee, the MD kept on pouring into the cup until it overflowed and started spilling onto the carpet.

Startled, the young manager asked: *“What are you doing? Why do you keep on pouring when my cup is already full?”* The MD replied: *“It is because your cup is already full that you are learning nothing from this meeting.”*

Not Knowing is emphasized in Zen practice where it is sometimes called “beginner’s mind.” An expert may think they know a subject deeply, yet be blinded to new possibilities by his or her preconceived ideas. In contrast, a beginner may see with fresh, unbiased eyes. The practice of beginner’s mind is to cultivate an ability to meet life without holding on to preconceived ideas, interpretations or judgements.

When we are full of our own thoughts we have no ability to take on new learning and respond to reality as it presents itself in the actual moment. It is not about getting rid of our experience and

wisdom, but rather not letting it get in the way of seeing things from a fresh perspective.

The more successful we are, the more tempting it is to believe that we already know what to do. Every project, every problem is different, so approaching a new challenge as if we've seen it all before, and applying already known and tested solutions, can lead to making errors. For example, some large consulting firms are sometimes perceived as making any problem fit their existing model. This is cost-effective because the firm will have already invested time developing its proprietary process that can be scaled and applied to many diverse client problems. A colleague remembers once meeting a very senior manager who was renowned in corporate America. He spent a lot of time telling her how interesting his life was and then he said: *"You know, I've seen it all. I've had a long career and there isn't any issue that I have not been through before."* She was shocked by his arrogance. *"It was clearly nonsense that he had seen it all. Even if he had been involved in 100 mergers, the 101st was not simply a cut and paste of one of the previous 99."*

At the One Young World Summit in 2012, Mohammad Yunus spoke about the way he started the Grameen Bank. Grameen is now a Nobel Peace Prize-winning microfinance organization and community development bank. Yunus said that the best thing that happened to him was that he didn't know anything about banking. In fact, if he'd known anything about banking he wouldn't have embarked on the micro-credit project in the first place.<sup>66</sup> *"Not knowing something can be a blessing sometimes. You are open, you can do things in your way without worrying about the rules and procedures. [...] Every time I needed a rule or a procedure I had to look at what conventional banks do, and once I learned what they did, I did the opposite. Conventional banks go to the rich, I go to the poor. Conventional banks go to men, I go to the women. Conventional banks are owned by rich people, Grameen Bank is owned by poor people. I could try because I didn't know anything."* His advice to young entrepre-

neurs is: *"Don't be scared if you don't know something, don't feel you have to be very smart to do something, stupid people like us do something and it works out."*<sup>67</sup>

According to Christian Busch, Associate Director at the London School of Economics Innovation Lab and Co-Founder of the Sandbox Network, modern micro-credit, mobile banking and micro-saving are all intriguing innovations that have come out of contexts where there was no real infrastructure in place before. So there was no need to institutionally unlearn; there was no pre-existing conception of "how things are done." For Christian these examples illustrate how a "don't know mindset" can trigger innovation without the baggage of history or existing path dependencies.

Christian points out that many interesting recent innovations have come out of resource-constrained environments, where there might either not be a pre-conception of a product/ service/ business model, or where the pre-conception is so far out of reach (e.g. cost-wise) that it is only peripherally taken into account. He gives the example of mobile banking in Kenya, where the process of people transferring airtime to their friends and families established an alternative to traditional banking services.

*"In a country where banks are either difficult to access or rarely affordable, one does not necessarily limit one's thinking to how to design a better cash machine. Rather, the challenge is tackled from a different angle: 1) We have mobile phones; 2) We have value that needs to be transferred (first airtime, then money); 3) We establish a platform for money-transactions that makes many of the institutionalized banking practices redundant. Whether 'not knowing' or 'not having access to', these innovations come out of environments where pre-conditions (such as institutions) are either not available, or not accessible."*

Radisson Blu Hotels (formerly Radisson Edwardian) in the UK during the 1990s made the then radical decision to take their

General Managers out of their hotels and make them responsible for different areas across the hotel chain, such as food and beverages or room service. Every two or three years they would get the opportunity to change their expert domains and become a beginner again. This way they could apply their knowledge to a new area in the business while bringing fresh perspectives and looking for interconnections between seemingly separate disciplines.

It is said that Morihei Ueshiba, the founder of the martial art Aikido, asked before he died at the age of 85 that he be buried wearing a white belt, the lowest in the belt rankings. Similarly, the most senior Aikido Masters choose to teach the basics of Aikido, a conscious choice to inhabit the “beginner” space. We too can make beginner’s mind a conscious choice and open up the space for new learning and growth.

### **Don’t Know mindset**

“Don’t Know mindset” is a central concept in the Eastern traditions. It simply means not prejudging a situation. In martial arts it means not assuming we will lose or win on the basis of knowing our opponent. Whether they seem stronger or weaker than us, we acknowledge that our judgement may be wrong, so we suspend it and keep an open mind. “Anything can happen” is a much better position to be in than expecting that we will win, then finding ourselves thrown on the mat.

In terms of competitive strategy, just because an organization looks weaker or smaller or seems to have worse products, we can’t prejudge who will win in a competitive market. With this lens, we need to have a strategy that allows for the competitor to be in a winning position as well as a weaker position vis-à-vis our organization. People in business are much more likely to be comfortable relying on analysis that tells them whether a competitor is likely to win or not. However, the “don’t know mindset,” or we could call it “don’t know strategy,” admits the possibility of winning or losing at the same time. This

approach prepares for both possibilities and manages the benefits and risks of both. It doesn’t close off the possibility that the competitor could beat or even destroy the company’s business. Also it acknowledges that our competitor may not even be on our radar. For example, 10 years ago we may not have predicted that supermarkets would be competitors to banks, providing personal finance products.

## 4. LET GO

*“By holding on,  
we destroy what we hope to preserve;  
by letting go,  
we feel secure in accepting what is.”*

*Leadership author Margaret Wheatley*

A photograph by artist Yves Klein, *Leap Into the Void*, is an iconic image of taking a leap into what seems like certain injury, into a street several feet below. Yet Klein's figure has a smile on his face. The artist was a trained martial artist and knew how to fall without incurring injury. The image of jumping into a liminal space is evocative. It is a powerful metaphor for leaving the security of the “ground,” and for a time experiencing “groundlessness.” Being in a space in which there is no certainty can also be a place of possibility, where different choices can be made. It can be a place of transformation. Imagine the skilled gymnast who seems to hover in space. She can choose any range of possible moves before coming back to land on her feet.

*Steven: I wanted to experience what it was like to do my own ‘leap into the void’ and experience groundlessness. To do that I enrolled in a “Flying Trapeze” class in Regents Park, London. Since a child I have been scared of heights, so arriving at the class and seeing half a dozen people, some beginners like me, who would*

*jump for the first time, seemed much more than theory. We were given the ground rules for safety. Although they sounded simple, they reminded me of what is needed to enter into the unknown. It is not a case of blindly following rules but finding what would best help support.*

*Rather than going straight to the 40ft trapeze, I started by practising on a trapeze that was only a few feet from the ground. I learnt to lift my body, raise my knees over the bar to hang and then again lower my feet and come back to the ground. I was then strapped up and began the climb up the ladder to do the jump. What struck me was that whilst I felt terrified, there were three school children, perhaps 11 years old, who were joking, seemingly at ease with the situation. I could see how seriously I was taking the activity and yet if I had the attitude of these younger boys I could have seen the challenge as play. Climbing up and being strapped in with safety ropes, I felt a trembling in my body, slight vertigo and nausea, but also excitement. Standing at the top, I thought I've committed myself now and there's no way back.*

*The call to jump came quicker than expected. How I would have wanted to jump on my own terms. Yet often we are called to jump before we are ready and we leap. As I leapt off the board there was a free-falling experience and then complete exhilaration as I flew through the air. All of the weight of my body was in my hands as I held on to the trapeze bar. At the top of the arc there is a place of least gravity and this is the time when it is best to lift the legs and hook them over the bar. I hooked my legs over. Not with ease, but I let gravity pull me backwards, lifting my hands off the bar and hanging from my knees. I was completely pulled by the movement with no effort on my part. This for me represented complete letting go and going with the movement rather than fighting it. It was the most exhilarating moment of the whole experience. I then raised my hands again and tried to descend gracefully with a back flip as instructed. That didn't happen! I fell to the safety of a matt below.*

*Jumping into the unknown is a practice. The jumpers who had done it before were better the second time and improved. I noticed my fear kick in and my fixed mindset that I'm just not good at this new skill. I've tried it once, but did not want to do it again. I believe this is my real challenge. Not to jump once, but to do so again and again till I can use that moment of space in a creative way.*

As we have seen in previous chapters, organizations and teams have expectations of the people in charge. This is hard-wired into us. When we find ourselves at the edge, unsure and confused, we are in danger of reverting to a dependent relationship with those in authority. We look to them to take responsibility away from us, to sort things out, to protect us. When our usual ways are no longer enough, when we haven't been here before, we don't readily tolerate people in authority Not Knowing.

When we move beyond our competence and approach the edge, we need to renegotiate the expectations that people may have on us. Peter King from Energeticos created a culture where staff relied on each other to set goals and stay accountable to those goals. By acknowledging that he didn't have all the answers, he left space for staff to develop their own approaches and to make their own decisions.

In spite of the risks, providing less direction allows for more learning and creativity. A study carried out in 2009 by scientists from the University of Louisville and MIT's Department of Brain and Cognitive Sciences took 48 children between the ages of three and six and presented them with a toy that had a variety of functions. Among other functions it could squeak, play notes, and reflect images. To one set of children only a single attribute was shown before they were allowed to play with the toy. For the other, no information was given about the toy. This group ended up playing for longer and discovering an average of six attributes of the toy, compared with the group that was told what to do, who discovered only four. A similar study at UC Berkeley demonstrated that kids given no instruction were much more

likely to come up with novel solutions to a problem. Alison Gopnik, professor of psychology at UC Berkeley, argues that if you programme a robot with instructions, when the unexpected occurs it will freeze. But if you give it many options and then encourage it to learn from mistakes, it can meet fresh challenges.<sup>69</sup>

The challenge of leadership is to deliberately dissolve the illusion of knowledge and control that traditionally surrounds those in charge. When we can't solve our challenges alone, we need to engage and mobilize others, to help tackle the issues together.

So rather than taking up a predictable role of showing the way, jumping in to answer a question or solve a problem, we can try something different. When we are silent, we allow others to come in and perhaps take control. If we share our point of view after everyone has spoken, there may be more room for creativity. When we don't indicate what we think or prefer to happen, we create the space for a different conversation.

Over the past 15 years Beth Jandernoa, an organizational learning consultant with the Presencing Institute in Cambridge, Massachusetts, has seen many organizational change projects not go according to plan and she is an expert in the process involved in letting go.

One particular project stands out for her. It involved a global technology company that had been the industry leader for decades, but was losing its competitive edge. New nimble competitors were eating away at their market share. The company was desperate for innovative ideas, looking for a dramatic shift from "business as usual." Everyone in the organization shared a commitment to shift to a new way of operating. The executives took a risk; they opened their usually closed strategic planning process to involve 130 people in giving input and making decisions about where the division would go and how it would get there. It was the first time in the history of the company that

suppliers, customers, and employees all along the value chain had participated in planning the future of the North American distribution. The executives had promised employees that their input would shape and influence the future design of the work processes, how the organization would then relate to customers and suppliers, and how decisions would be made.

It was a couple of days before the last conference, in which collective agreements on the strategy would be made. Four weeks had passed since the prior conference and Beth was on a call with her team to finalize the design. However, in their check-in the client representatives related some shocking news. Two weeks after the second conference, the executives received an ultimatum from the company's senior executive team to make some critical decisions earlier than had been expected. This meant jumping ahead of the timeline agreed upon with the employees, and making important decisions without the final input of the strategic planning participants. The representatives relayed the fact that rumors were flying around and that many employees were outraged, since they perceived this move to be a betrayal of the promise to include them in the process.

*“I hadn’t seen this coming and in the moment I could taste the fear of failure and imagine scenes of angry employees. In this place of Not Knowing I realized that I had to hold steady and to draw on skills and resources that I hadn’t used before. As a team we knew we had to ‘pull a rabbit out of a hat’; in other words, we had to find a path that would take us into new territory. We had to let go of our design and create a process to confront the perceived betrayal in a way that would re-build trust and commitment.”*

The team virtually stepped back, erased the agenda and began to design a way for employees and management to step into each other's shoes and to understand why management had taken the steps that they had and to hear the interpretation that the employees had made. Suddenly all the creative juices started to flow. They ordered two tall ladders to use in the con-

ference: one for a manager to climb while answering questions, representing the story of management, and the second for an employee to climb while representing employees' reactions.

When the conference opened you could feel the tension in the room. But, instead of avoiding it, the team invited a manager and employee to come to the front of the room to represent the feelings and thoughts of each group. The room fell silent as the manager began to share her story of the urgency and pressure management was feeling and then the union employee revealed his view of the incident. As the manager and employee took each step up the ladder as they answered questions about what assumptions had driven their actions, what conclusions they had drawn, and what beliefs they were operating from, members of the audience, managers and employees alike, participated by calling out their answers to the questions as the two representatives climbed each step.

What became apparent to everyone were the good intentions displayed by each side and the misunderstandings that had driven people's actions. Once this was revealed, the mood of the whole group changed palpably. Trust that had become frayed was renewed and deepened, and the division went on to generate new pathways informed by this seeming disruption.

*“My team and I learned the importance of letting go and attending to the reality that is happening now rather than sticking to an agenda. We faced our own fear of failing and leapt into the unknown. We found that we were actually grateful for the mess that had arisen, since it built new muscle in the organization for facing differences along the uncertain path ahead.”*

Rather than seeing strategy as a way to control a process or to expect a particular outcome, we can step back and attend to the current reality of what is. Rather than follow slavishly what we have planned, we can work with what we already have. One of the keys to this is giving voice to what is unsaid, so

that people can be heard. What can seem to be a silent blockage to change can suddenly become known and worked with, through dialogue.

A word of caution, though. **We need to be careful about what we let go of.** Tied up in that are complexities concerning our agency and competency. Sometimes the temptation is to throw out too much of what we know. When a colleague of Diana's started in a role that was new to her, requiring her to develop new skills and expertise, she felt that everything she had accrued that had got her to that point was no longer useful in her new context. She had assumed that all the things she had learnt in the previous position, such as management and strategy, had no place now. Only later did she realize that she had thrown out too much and had stopped trusting what she knew. This had an impact on her confidence and ability to contribute the breadth of her experience.

## 5. SAY "I DON'T KNOW"

*"To admit to ignorance, uncertainty or ambivalence is to cede your place on the masthead, your slot on the program, and allow all the coveted eyeballs to turn instead to the next hack who's more than happy to sell them all the answers."*

*American essayist and cartoonist Tim Kreider*

Why is Not Knowing so hard? To move forward in situations of uncertainty we have to cross the threshold, the edge at "Finis-terre." And the only way to do that is to make a simple but devilishly hard statement: "I don't know."

Legend goes that Socrates' friend Chaerephon asked the Delphic Oracle whether anyone was wiser than Socrates. When the answer came back that there was none wiser in the whole of Athens, Socrates set out on a mission to solve the paradox. How could he, a man so profoundly ignorant, be considered to be the wisest man of all? He spoke to politicians, poets and other elites, and realized that they were all pretending to have knowledge and wisdom. Socrates concluded that the Oracle was right. Unlike everyone else, he knew that he was ignorant, which made him wise: *"I know one thing: that I know nothing."*

Can we accept that we don't know? Can we admit that we don't know? Can we deliberately acknowledge and enter into a space

where our frame of reference is “I don’t know?” So when the boss says – “I looked at the data and I know that if we take this course of action sales will rise” – we can say – “This is a new market, so we can’t be sure. Let’s try a variety of things.” Or when we attend a meeting that goes over our heads, rather than go along with it all and pretend that we understand the issues and agree to the actions, can we say “I am not yet decided. Can we discuss this further?” This may be unsettling, especially if we are leading others or a key decision maker. As Nicolas Petrovic, CEO of Eurostar, says: *“the managers who can’t tolerate ambiguity are those that feel lost when you answer ‘it depends’.”*

It’s hard not to know when people are looking to us to supply the answers. Tim Kreider describes the dilemma facing journalists like him: *“The one thing no editorialist or commentator in any media is ever supposed to say is ‘I don’t know’: that they’re too ignorant about the science of climate change to have an informed opinion; that they frankly have no idea what to do about gun violence in this country; or that they’ve just never quite understood the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and in all honesty they’re sick of hearing about it.”*<sup>70</sup>

Quoting British psychoanalyst Wilfred Bion, academics Robert French and Peter Simpson argue that if we can resist the temptation to fill in with knowing the space that is created by ignorance, we allow for new ideas, thoughts and insights to emerge.<sup>71</sup>

This doesn’t mean that we need to forget everything, or deny what we already know. It rather means that we can hold our knowledge and our ideas lightly. Bion provides the metaphor that we need a “binocular vision” – keeping both what we know and what we don’t know in focus at the same time.

When Francisca Perez, an experienced scientist from Spain, recently moved from a science-led pharmaceutical company to a commercial tourism firm in Switzerland, she found resistance

to her usual Not Knowing approach. *“From my scientist perspective, ‘I don’t know’ was synonymous with ‘I’m confident’ (only insecure people need to fake it) and ‘you can trust me’ (because I will tell you exactly what I know and what I don’t).”*

However, she quickly came to realize that those words had a completely different meaning in the business world. She was now working in a fast-paced industry, in a role where her input could have a very direct impact on business results. It was fundamental that she knew and could supply certainties. *“In this new context, saying ‘I don’t know’ was the equivalent of saying ‘I’m not suitable for the job’.”* For the first time in her life, Francisca found herself in a situation where she did not have the permission to not know. For a number of months she silently wondered every day whether she would make the mistake that would result in her eventually being fired. Francisca has since adapted to the new environment and learned how to balance the tension between her internal openness to Not Knowing and the outside pressure to know.

In spite of the potential risks, admitting that we don’t know can develop a sense of connection with those around us. The vulnerability and humility in that admission can bring us closer to the people we work with, and can engage them in the challenge of moving forward and trying to solve the problem at hand. The power differential and the hierarchical structure become inconsequential when we are facing our biggest challenges together.

Glenn Fernandez, a former senior sales manager at an international dairy company, found himself leading a new team after a restructure. He recalls: *“I didn’t know how to engage these people that had lost half of their work due to the change in business strategy. They used to be a high-performing team, but now they seemed disengaged, lacking drive and purpose. Managing people through a period of uncertainty is a tough gig, and the key executive that had faith in me had left the organization, so I had no support. This is where I went ‘holy shit’! This is where I felt the*

*most vulnerable. I had lost my way, and my biggest supporter and advocate was not there... I shrunk in my shell. I struggled for several weeks, turning up to work and doing stuff, not understanding my purpose. I felt insecure. I really had no idea what to do with this new team. I was in this dark spot and I swirled around it for a while, with no guidance from anyone.”*

One day Glenn decided to take the team away and create a space to talk about what was going on. They went on a two-day off-site trip. He decided to take the risk of sharing that he felt insecure, how he'd been waiting for someone to tell him what to do. He confided in them that he did not know how to deal with the situation, that he had more questions than answers. It was the first time that he had opened up to a new team about his vulnerabilities and he was really nervous. The organization had a top-down, micromanagement culture. None of his managers had ever shared their insecurities with him.

*“The message to them was – ‘I trust you, I respect you, and they got it’. What happened was that sharing with them how I felt opened up the space for them to also share their story with the group. Everyone had the same reaction to the changes, insecurity, self-doubt... it was a shared experience that galvanized the team. Saying ‘I don’t know’ is a great leveller.”*

The act of saying “I don’t know” sends a clear signal to others that this is a situation where existing knowledge will not be our guide. It gives us and others permission to look for other ways, to be a beginner again. Acknowledging our limitations is incredibly liberating. As Jean-Jacques Rousseau writes, *“I do not know is a phrase which becomes us.”*

## 6. ENTERTAIN DOUBT

*“To believe fully and at the same moment to have doubts is not at all a contradiction: it presupposes a greater respect for truth, an awareness that truth always goes beyond anything that can be said or done at any given moment.”*

*American existential psychologist Rollo May*

*Diana: In coaching sessions I often hear my clients grapple with the question “How do I know I’m right?” It is the hardest question to hear and one of the most challenging to work with. Many of these people have high-powered jobs and heavy decision-making responsibilities.... We carve out our lives in right and wrongs, black and white. We look for a sign, any sign, that shows us we are heading in the “right” direction. Can we entertain the possibility of doubt?*

Business thinker and author Charles Handy, now 81, describes himself as a social philosopher. In a conversation Steven had with Charles and his wife, Liz, Charles recalled a meeting at the London Business School when they were choosing who to promote from a lecturer to a professor. There was one candidate and people knew that he was not right, but they could not put their finger on exactly why this was so. Then someone said: *“The problem with him is that he has no decent doubt.”*

*“It’s OK to have decent doubt,”* said Charles. *“Those who advocate certainty are not credible. This is the nature of faith, having some belief that all will be well, even in the uncertainty.”* He recalled Julian of Norwich, the medieval English mystic, who summed up *“All shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well.”* This much-loved saying holds much hope for us – that even if we don’t understand and are confused in the midst of uncertainty, we will be OK in the end.

Reliance on our existing knowledge can often trap us – especially when new information comes along. The best academics and leaders entertain doubt about their own state of knowledge and this helps them open up new discoveries and creates “pockets” of Not Knowing.

The ability to question as a matter of habit, to admit that the lens through which we are looking at the world is subjective and flawed, is an essential leadership skill. And it can help us to be able to make better decisions. Doubting the outcome of a project can free us up to engage with others and invite in different views that add new insights into complex challenges.

Carsten Sudhoff, the former Chief HR Officer of the World Economic Forum and founder of Circular Society, recalls a night in Dubai where everything changed for him. He’d arrived in the iconic UAE city the night before the annual summit on the Global Agenda of the World Economic Forum.

*“It must have been the overall ambiance and the heat, as well as the intensity of our conversation that triggered a deep state of questioning. Was leadership, or the absence of it, really the only cause for the many large-scale issues society faces? Or was leadership a derivative of a larger societal imbalance? In a world dominated by complexity and ambiguity, where the environment, societies and economies are so obviously interconnected, can we really continue this exclusive focus on individual success?”*

Carsten hypothesized that many of the burning issues could be resolved if people considered their interconnectedness with others. He had no idea if his hypothesis was correct, but the thought of bringing the “reality of interconnectedness” into the realm of leadership and societal development was intriguing.

*“That night, I could not sleep. I had so many questions circulating in my mind: If this hypothesis is true, how can societal change be brought about? How should I proceed? Am I just too naïve?”*

When he returned to Switzerland, Carsten began drafting a vision in a white paper. An experienced senior executive, he was adept at formulating strategic documents, but it quickly became clear that this one was going to be very different. This time he was writing about his personal dream, his vision for a better world, where individuals and institutions could achieve success and satisfaction as they improved the lives of others. *“With every line I wrote I saw the vastness of the unknown expanding in front of me. Every finished chapter produced more questions that I did not know the answers for. Doubt settled in. It felt both a frightening yet extremely energizing space to be in.”*

Carsten realized that this was not just another project; it was his dream, his calling, and it might mean giving up his role at the World Economic Forum to make it become a reality. He was plagued by doubt. *“Do I have what it takes to be an entrepreneur? I had a track record of creativity and persistence. But was that enough? I had succeeded in different organizational settings. But could I survive without corporate support and on my own? Could I earn a living this way?”*

As he opened up and shared his doubts with some of his entrepreneur friends, he understood that the anxiety he was experiencing and his self-doubts were absolutely normal and healthy for anyone in that situation. *“They did not necessarily have the answers to my questions but the discussion helped me frame and shape the issues. There was no such thing as a perfect script for*

*me to follow.*” Carsten has since left the World Economic Forum and started Circular Society, a social enterprise that aims to drive a new way of thinking and acting to improve life perspectives for individuals and society as a whole.

Doubt is a doorway to possibility and admitting doubt shows flexibility and openness to learning and creativity. However, let’s not confuse that with a lack of belief in ourselves. The assumption that admitting doubt is a weakness is a barrier to engaging with Not Knowing. We don’t want people to see the more unsure part of ourselves – we assume that if people saw our doubt, they would lose faith in us and we don’t like the way this thought makes us feel. In a recent biography of George W Bush<sup>72</sup> it was revealed that in spite of his public steadfast certainty about the Iraq war, even he privately showed doubt. What stopped Bush from admitting his doubt publicly was his view that leaders must show certainty in order to be credible and to be taken seriously.