The Cuckoo Clock Syndrome:

Addicted to Command, Allergic to Leadership.

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Abstract

This article considers the extent to which we are addicted to particular ways of configuring the world and responding in a culturally appropriate way. It suggests that the original Tame and Wicked problems typology of Rittell and Webber (1973) can be useful expanded to provide a heuristic for explaining this addiction and then focuses upon the most common approach – an addiction to Crisis and Command. Some likely explanations for this addiction are discussed and some illustrative examples provided. It concludes that not only does our predilection for Crisis and Command undermine our attempts to address Wicked problems adequately but that 'Leadership' – defined as persuading the collective to take responsibility for collective problems – is often regarded not just as difficult and dangerous, but as 'the enemy of the people'. We are, then, not only likely to be addicted to Command but also likely to be allergic to Leadership.

Keywords: Command, Management, Leadership, Addiction, Cuckoo Clock Syndrome

Introduction: the Cuckoo Clock Syndrome

Harry Lime – the eponymous *Third Man* played by Orson Welles (a film set in early post-war Vienna and released in 1949) – suggested that crisis, conflict and war were ultimately more valuable to human progress than peace. In one famous scene set on top of the *Riesenrad*, the large Ferris wheel in the *Prater* amusement park in the Soviet occupied section of the city, Lime confronts his erstwhile friend Holly Martins (played by Joseph Cotton) about the latter's ostensibly sentimental concerns for other people's suffering, and denies the value of acting heroically in a world that has descended to little more than a jungle. Lime compares the people below them to mere dots – irrelevant to his world, the only world of any importance to him.

> Look down there, would you really feel any pity if one of those – "dots" – stopped moving forever? If I offered you £20,000 for every dot that stopped moving would you really tell me to keep my money?... Don't be so gloomy, after all it's not that awful. What the fellow said—in Italy, for thirty years under the Borgias, they had warfare, terror, murder and bloodshed, but they produced Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci and the Renaissance. In Switzerland, they had brotherly love, they had five hundred years of democracy and peace—and what did that produce: the cuckoo clock.

Of course, the quote itself is erroneous on several fronts (and Orson Welles merely extemporised in the film to fill the time available): the 'Italians' continued to suffer invasions from France, Spain and Austria without continuing to produce the wealth of artists that had flourished under the Borgias. The Swiss, who probably did not invent the cuckoo clock (though it does produce about half the world's watches in terms of value), were involved in significant levels of violence both internally and externally, at least until the 20th century, and have produced 113 Nobel Prize winners, including, of course, Albert Einstein. Indeed, the 'Italians' might have produced more if they hadn't been fighting each other and the invading French and Spanish armies for so long; anyway, who says that the products of Michelangelo and da Vinci are superior to the 'ordinary' lives of thousands of Swiss citizens amongst whom we can number Rousseau, Piaget, Zwingli, Le Corbusier, de Saussure and Jung? But just as Lime is addicted to perceiving the world as a permanent crisis – where commanders rule, so Martins is addicted to its opposite, a world full of complex problems that require collaboration to resolve – where leaders engage with partners; and around these two positions the Ferris wheel keeps moving in the way that it has always done – driven on by the administrative machinery of cogs. This is the Cuckoo Clock syndrome – an addiction to a cultural perception that configures the world in the same way irrespective of how others construe that same world or whether your approach appears to address the problem in a successful way.

In what follows I want to consider the extent to which we remain favourably inclined towards, if not actually addicted to, configuring the world in particular ways – as either one of permanent crises, where the only viable responses are decisive commands; or permanent tame problems, where the only viable responses are to keep rolling out the same process that led you into the problem in the first place; or permanent wicked problems, where the only viable response is to delay decision-making while you engage in yet more consultation and collaboration. These three elegant responses are actually ideal types in the Weberian sense, rather than empirically common processes, but I want to use the typology as a way to open up the debate. That is, they are archetypal tendencies not iron laws – but nevertheless they remain extraordinarily difficult to displace. Of course, not every situation is a crisis or is constituted as a crisis by the decision-makers, but this tendency to assume that most things either are crises – or don't get addressed until they become one – seems particularly appropriate in the current climate and as a backdrop to our apparent inability to address very complex issues in any way

other than through command and control. In the next section I want to consider a development of Rittell and Weber's (1973) original Tame and Wicked Problem typology as a way of establishing why this tendency has serious consequences.

Tame, Wicked and Critical Problems

Management and Leadership, as two forms of authority rooted in the distinction between certainty and uncertainty, can be related to Rittell and Webber's (1973) typology of Tame and Wicked Problems (Grint, 2008). A Tame Problem may be complicated but is resolvable through unilinear acts and it is likely to have occurred before. In other words, there is only a limited degree of uncertainty and thus it is associated with Management. Tame Problems are akin to puzzles – for which there is always an answer. The (scientific) manager's role, therefore, is to provide the appropriate process to solve the problem. A Wicked Problem is more complex, rather than just complicated – that is, it cannot be removed from its environment, solved, and returned without affecting the environment. Moreover, there is no clear relationship between cause and effect. Such problems are often intractable – for instance, trying to develop a health service on the basis of a scientific approach (assuming it was a Tame Problem) would suggest providing everyone with all the services and medicines they required based only on their medical needs. However, with an ageing population and an increasing medical ability to intervene and maintain life, we have a potentially infinite increase in demand but a finite level of economic resource, so there cannot be a scientific or medical or Tame solution to the problem of the National Health Service (NHS). In sum we cannot provide everything for everybody; at some point we need to make a political decision about who gets what and based on what criteria. This inherently contested arena is typical of a Wicked Problem. If we think about the NHS as the NIS – the National Illness Service – then we have a different understanding of the problem because it is essentially a series of Tame Problems: fixing a broken leg is the equivalent of a Tame Problem – there is a scientific solution and medical professionals in hospitals know how to fix them. But if you run (sorry, crawl) into a restaurant for your broken leg to be fixed it becomes a Wicked Problem because it's unlikely that anyone there will have the knowledge or the resources to fix it. Thus the category of problems is subjective not objective – what kind of a problem you have depends on where you are sitting and what you already know.

Moreover, many of the problems that the NHS deal with – obesity, drug abuse, violence – are not simply problems of health, they are often deeply complex social problems that sit across and between different government departments and institutions so attempts to treat them through a single institutional framework are almost bound to fail. Indeed, because there are often no 'stopping' points with Wicked Problems – that is the point at which the problem is solved (e.g., there will be no more crime because we have solved it) - we often end up having to admit that we cannot solve Wicked Problems. Conventionally, we associate leadership with precisely the opposite – the ability to solve

problems, act decisively and to know what to do. But we cannot know how to solve Wicked Problems, and therefore we need to be very wary of acting decisively precisely because we cannot know what will happen. If we knew what to do it would be a Tame Problem not a Wicked Problem. Yet the pressure to act decisively often leads us to try to solve the problem as if it was a Tame Problem. When Global Warming first emerged as a problem some of the responses concentrated on solving the problem through science (a Tame response), manifest in the development of biofuels; but we now know that the first generation of biofuels appear to have denuded the world of significant food resources so that what looked like a solution actually became another problem. Again, this is typical of what happens when we try to solve Wicked Problems – other problems emerge to compound the original problem. So we can make things better or worse – we can drive our cars slower and less or faster and more – but we may not be able to solve Global Warming, we may just have to learn to live with a different world and make the best of it we can. In other words, we cannot start again and design a perfect future – though many political and religious extremists might want us to.

The 'we' in this is important because it signifies the importance of the collective in addressing Wicked Problems. Tame problems might have individual solutions in the sense that an individual is likely to know how to deal with it. But since Wicked Problems are partly defined by the absence of an answer on the part of the leader then it behoves the individual leader to ask the right kind of questions to engage the collective in an attempt to come to terms with the problem. In other words, Wicked Problems require the transfer of authority from individual to collective because only collective engagement can hope to address the problem. The uncertainty involved in Wicked Problems imply that leadership, as I am defining it, is not a science but an art – the art of engaging a community in facing up to complex collective problems.

Examples of Wicked Problems would include: developing a transport strategy, or a response to global warming, or a response to anti-social behaviour, or a national health system. Wicked Problems are not necessarily rooted in longer time frames than Tame Problems because oftentimes an issue that appears to be Tame or Critical can be turned into a (temporary) Wicked Problem by delaying the decision. For example, President Kennedy's actions during the Cuban Missile Crisis were often based on asking questions of his civilian assistants that required some time for reflection – despite the pressure from his military advisers to provide instant answers. Had Kennedy accepted the advice of the American Hawks we would have seen a third set of problems that fall outside the Wicked/Tame dichotomy – a Critical Problem, in this case probably a nuclear war. However, reframing a problem as Wicked can also be used as an excuse for inactivity when actually a decision is required. This is particularly appropriate for the third set of problems I will refer to as Critical.

A Critical Problem, e.g. a 'crisis', is presented as self-evident in nature, as encapsulating very little time for decision-making and action, and it is often associated with authoritarianism. Here there is virtually no uncertainty about what needs to be done – at least in the behaviour of the Commander, whose role is to take the required decisive action – that is to provide the answer to the problem, not to engage SOPs (management) if these delay the decision - or ask questions (leadership).

Translated into Critical Problems I suggest that for such crises we do need decision-makers who are god-like in their decisiveness and their ability to provide the answer to the crisis. And since we reward people who are good in crises – and ignore people who are such good managers that there are very few crises – Commanders soon learn to seek out (or reframe situations as) crises. Of course, it may be that the Commander remains privately uncertain about whether the action is appropriate or the presentation of the situation as a crisis is persuasive, but that uncertainty will probably not be apparent to the followers of the Commander.
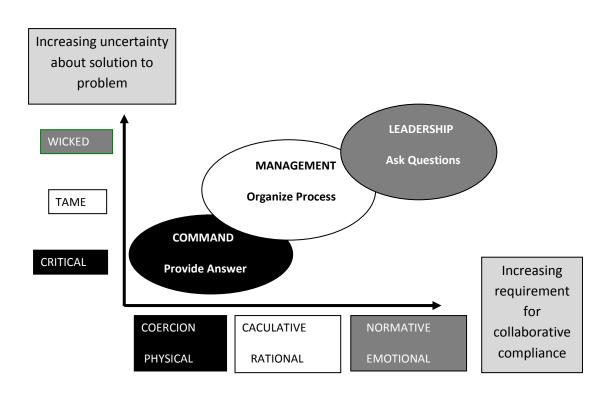
These three forms of authority – Command, Management and Leadership - are, in turn, another way of suggesting that the role of those responsible for decision-making is to find the appropriate Answer, Process and Question to address the problem respectively. This is not meant as a discrete typology but an heuristic device to enable us to understand why those charged with decision-making sometimes appear to act in ways that others find incomprehensible. Thus I am not suggesting that the correct decision-making process lies in the correct analysis of the situation – that would be to generate a deterministic approach – but I am suggesting that decision-makers tend to legitimize their actions on the basis of a persuasive account of the situation. In short, the social construction of the problem legitimizes the deployment of a particular form of authority. Take, for example, the current situation of public finances. Many countries are mired in debates about which public expenditure to cut and which – if any – to protect. Indeed, politicians of all varieties seem to be falling over themselves to acquire the Commander's mantle to inflict pain upon the apparently profligate public sector wasters of our tax revenues. But this is to mistake the cause for the effect – the cause of the problem is the profligate investment bankers not the parsimonious public sector employees! Moreover, it is often the case that the same individual or group with authority will switch between the Command, Management and Leadership roles as they perceive – and constitute – the problem as Critical, Tame or Wicked, or even as a single problem that itself shifts across these boundaries. Indeed, this movement – often perceived as 'inconsistency' by the decision maker's opponents – is crucial to success as the situation, or at least our perception of it, changes.

That persuasive account of the problem partly rests in the decision-makers access to – and preference for – particular forms of power, and herein lies the irony of 'leadership': it remains the most difficult of approaches and one that many decision-makers will often try to avoid at all costs – another reason why an addiction to command appears so commonplace.

The notion of 'power' suggests that we need to consider how different approaches to, and forms of, power fit with this typology of authority, and amongst the most useful for our purposes is Etzioni's (1964) typology of compliance which distinguished between Coercive, Calculative and Normative Compliance. Coercive or physical power was related to total institutions, such as prisons or armies; Calculative Compliance was related to 'rational' institutions, such as companies; and Normative Compliance was related to institutions or organizations based on shared values, such as clubs and professional societies. This compliance typology fits well with the typology of problems: Critical Problems are often associated with Coercive Compliance; Tame Problems are associated with Calculative Compliance and Wicked Problems are associated with Normative Compliance – you cannot force people to follow you in addressing a Wicked Problem because the nature of the problem demands that followers have to want to help.

This typology can be plotted along the relationship between two axes as shown below in figure 1 below with the vertical axis representing increasing uncertainty about the solution to the problem – in the behaviour of those in authority – and the horizontal axis representing the increasing need for collaboration in resolving the problem.
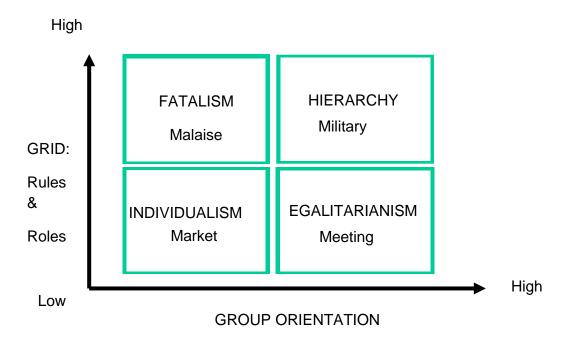
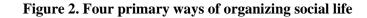**Figure 1   Typology of problems, power and authority**

This might be regarded as obvious to many people – but if it is, why do we remain unable to effect such change? To answer that, I want to turn to Cultural Theory and explore some so called 'Elegant Solutions'.

Cultural Theory, Elegance and Clumsiness

Mary Douglas (2003/8) argued that we could heuristically capture most cultures on the basis of two discrete criteria: Grid and Group. Grid relates the significance of roles and rules in a culture – some are very rigid – such as a government bureaucracy - but others are very loose or liberal – such as an informal club. Group relates to the importance of the group in a culture – some cultures are wholly oriented around the group – such as a football team - while others are more individually oriented – such as a gathering of entrepreneurs. When these points are plotted on a two by two matrix the following appears.

Figure 2. Four primary ways of organizing social life

Where a culture embodies both High Grid and High Group we tend to see rigid hierarchies, such as the military, where individuals are less relevant than the group. Where the culture remains High Group oriented but lacks the concern for rules and roles in Low Grid we see Egalitarian cultures,

epitomised by those organizations where the group meeting is sacred and the search for consensus critical. Where the Grid remains low and is matched by an equal indifference to the Group, we tend to see Individualist cultures – the land of entrepreneurs, rational choice, and market loving politicians for whom any notion of the collective or rules is perceived as an unnecessary inhibitor of efficiency and freedom. The final category is that of the Fatalist, where the group dimension is missing but the isolated individuals believe themselves to be undermined by the power of rules and roles.

Such cultures often tend to be self-supporting and philosophically consistent. In other words, hierarchists perceive the world through the prism of hierarchist cultures such that problems are understood as manifestations of the absence of sufficient rules or the enforcement of rules by the group or society. In contrast, egalitarians see the same problem as one connected to the weakness of the collective community – it is less about rules and more about the community generating greater solidarity to solve the problem. Individualists would have little faith in this – the problem is obviously (for them) to do with the individuals – individuals should be more responsible for their own situation. Fatalists, however, have given up for the rules are against them and there is no group to help them out of their malaise.

Now the problem is that such internally consistent – or Elegant – modes of understanding the world are fine for dealing with Critical or Tame Problems because we know how to solve them and previous approaches have worked. Individualists can solve the problem of decreasing carbon emissions from cars – a Tame problem open to a scientific solution, but they cannot solve global warming – a Wicked Problem. Egalitarians can help ex-offenders back into the community – a Tame Problem – but they cannot solve crime – a Wicked Problem. And Hierarchists can improve rule enforcement for the fraudulent abuse of social services – a Tame Problem – but they cannot solve poverty – a Wicked Problem. Indeed, Wicked Problems don't offer themselves up to be solved by such Elegant approaches precisely because these problems lie outside and across several different cultures and institutions. To address these we need to adopt so called Clumsy Solutions that pragmatically draw from across a wide range of otherwise contradictory policies and cultures to develop an experimental method for addressing Wicked Problems (Verweij and Thompson, 2006). This is the land of the *bricoleur* – the experimental pragmatists not the architect or scientist because we cannot know whether the approach we adopt will actually work – if we did it would be a Tame or Critical problem. But because we are prisoners of our own cultural preferences we become addicted to them and have great difficulty stepping outside our world to see something differently – to act experimentally; as Proust (2006:2) put it: 'the real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes.'

Cultural Cataracts & the Problem of Addiction

Despite Proust's injunction, having new eyes is actually extraordinarily difficult, probably because we have culturally induced cataracts. In other words, our way of perceiving the world is the opposite of Proust's new eyes, we have occluded and tired visions of normality to the point of being addicted to our internally coherent 'elegant' views of the world.

Thus, events are construed as manifestations of a Tame Problem that we know how to deal with and we roll out the quasi scientific Standard Operating Procedures that resolved the problem the last time it emerged – for instance, we put more troops on the ground in Afghanistan on the assumption that this kind of response worked in Iraq. That the troop 'surge' in Iraq under General Patreus was not simply a matter of doing more of the same but actually running directly against the existing strategy to develop a much more complex and negotiated response – 'the least worst move' that may still not have worked - is often disregarded (Ricks, 2009). In this case Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld and the pre-Patreus military hierarchy seemed addicted to doing more of the same in a carbon copy of troop tactics in the First World War. If the first day of the battle of the Somme had generated 56,000 British casualties without a breakthrough the obvious solution was to keep doing the same thing until the Germans realized they couldn't win or they ran out of troops first. Only in 1918 did both sides gradually understand that being more efficient at keeping the bayonet line straight as it approached the enemy was never going to achieve the breakthrough envisaged (Zabecki, 2006).

Or a situation might consistently be interpreted as a Critical Problem, a crisis, which requires the effective and decisive actions of a commander, a hero. Indeed, because the response to the problem is limited to addressing the problem as if it was limited to a Critical Problem, rather than using the issue as a bridge to address the Wicked Problem that lies behind the Critical symptoms, the consequence of this is to ensure the crisis is permanent. For example, the failure of a sports team to achieve success is often denounced as the responsibility of the manager who must be sacrificed to assuage the supporters who – yet again – have been robbed of their just deserts. This usually destabilizes the team yet further and results in the new manager also being scapegoated in a downward spiral of failure and recrimination.

Finally, the situation might be configured as neither Critical nor Tame but Wicked, requiring a thoughtful, reflective and collective response by the group rather than a hasty response through a commander or a standard response via management. In the Wicked category of uncertainty the role of the decision-maker is to ask questions and to engage the collective in the (often painful) reassessment of their own situation and the realization that somehow the collective need to act differently to address the problem. Enter stage left the convoluted world of public sector partnership or global attempts to reduce carbon emissions where the essential egalitarianism undermines any attempt at progress and the interested parties refuse to give themselves or others permission to make a decision in the absence

of a consensus. The failure is usually then displaced to all other parties bar the one doing the displacing and that is precisely mirrored by all the other 'innocent' partners. I suggest that these three default responses can be the equivalent of an addiction.

- Hierarchists can become addicted to command to the point where Critical Problems are everywhere and Wicked Problems nowhere. Ironically this turns Wicked and Tame problems into Critical Problems, and thus legitimizes the command decision style, which actively inhibits addressing the underlying causes of a Wicked Problem or generating the simple solution redolent of a Tame Problem.

- Egalitarians can become addicted to 'leadership' where every decision emanates from a Wicked problem that demands consensus, debate and extended reflection, rather than decision. Ironically this turns Tame Problems and Critical problems into Wicked Problems so that a self-evident crisis is ignored and relatively simple Tame solutions are avoided.

- Individualists can be addicted to 'management' where, following F.W.Taylor, everything can be resolved through the application of standard operating procedures and the correct scientific understanding of cause and effect. Thus crises are addressed pedantically and with unwarranted defence to 'procedure', while Wicked Problems simply do not exist.

Wicked Problems, Addiction to Command and Allergic to Leadership

This issue of addiction to elegance is particularly problematic with regard to Wicked Problems because these tend to be the most serious, at least in the long run, and because most of our leaders seem to have a preference for treating Wicked Problems as Critical Problems, requiring a coercive response from a commander. But perhaps the point is not to insist that no problem is critical – a crisis – or that they are all Wicked and therefore collaborative leadership is always necessary, or they are Tame so we just need to apply scientific SOPs – but to use the apparent crisis to make the collective face up to their collective responsibilities. In effect to launch the collective processes associated with Wicked Problems on the back of the limited stability derived from Command. But since we are often addicted we tend to prefer temporary bouts of command 'solutions' to all kinds of Wicked Problems that can only really be addressed by long term collaborative engagements. So, for example, we see the problem of knife crime addressed as a crisis with various uncoordinated and short term command responses (more stop and search or longer prison sentences based on 'three hits and out' and so on), all of which usually fail. In contrast the only effective responses seem to be those that treat the problem as a short term crisis that generates the impetus to reconfigure the problem as Wicked which requires a long term collaborative engagement by the whole community.

This implies not that individuals or commanders are irrelevant but that they are critical in the development of the conditions for persuading people to enact an appropriate response to a Wicked Problem; thus only through the careful construction of a 'crisis' can Leadership be deployed to address a Wicked Problem effectively. The problem, if we are addicted to Crisis, is: first, that in shifting from one decision mode to the other we are often accused of being inconsistent in a situation – in effect we need to be managers, leaders and commanders at different times; second, that the addiction to command is not restricted to power-hungry commanders but also involves anxiety prone and responsibility-avoiding followers; third, that getting off the addiction will require the equivalent of 'cold turkey' – the unpleasant period of 'drying out' so that the addiction is gradually halted. Instant cold turkey can be as fatal as the initial addiction.

Take, for example, the Greek economy – which in February 2010 teetered on the brink of financial meltdown – yet the 'cold turkey' cure considered by both the Greek government and the wider EU did not generate wide scale support from a Greek population that recognized the scale of the problem but, on the contrary, a rash of strikes and public unrest. What such events do is highlight the way we seem to construe events as crises that require the effective and decisive actions of a commander, a hero (preferably charismatic) who can command the solution. That 'solution' might temporarily appear to fix the problem but more often than not the problem recurs because the fix only addresses the symptoms not the cause of the problem. The consequence of this is to ensure the crisis is permanent.

That we are in a permanent crisis seems commonplace. Indeed, there has been a flurry of publications recently that have used the term 'crisis' and 'permanent' as a starting point. Heifetz et al (2009), for example, have argued that 'today's mix of urgency, high stakes and uncertainty will continue as the norm even after the recession ends' (2009:3) As a consequence they argue that we should 'foster adaptation', embrace the disequilibrium that will provide just enough pressure on followers to accept the necessary changes, and maximize the opportunities for people to experience leadership by supporting organizational experiments. All this is because we are allegedly facing a crisis of a different category than before – a 'permanent crisis' in which the old ways must be replaced by the new ways. That includes replacing our normal response to crisis - avoiding the causes and merely treating the symptoms. In the public sector this would manifest itself in seeking what services should not be provided by the public services, rather than simply finding more efficient ways to cut budgets.

Aside from resonances of Marx's and later Trotsky's 'Permanent Revolution' thesis in which the utopian future can only be reached by increasing the revolutionary activity of the proletariat and its political party, the closest this notion gets to an equivalent is the theory of permanent war (Amin, 2004), or in literary terms George Orwell's *1984* dystopia where the conflict between Oceania, Eurasia, and Eastasia is never-ending – hence the requirement for the government to retain authoritarian control over the population. Of course, whether we are living in an era of permanent

crisis is highly debateable and always contestable, but the nature of 'the situation' (Cf. Grint, 2005) is less relevant here than the causes of this common assumption; so why do we assume this?

First, there is an issue that relates to the fear of failure that itself derives from the fear of freedom. When leaders and managers make an error of judgement they are not usually forgiven their human frailties but dragged through the proverbial public streets on symbolic tumbrils. As Durkheim (1973) argued, many followers like to perceive their leaders as gods – omnipotent, omniscient, and flawed; so when the inevitable error occurs, those same followers that hailed the leader as a god can then have the satisfaction of watching the public execution of the leader who 'betrayed' their trust. The result is an abject fear of responsibility, manifest most clearly in the response of politicians and public service managers in, for example, Children's Services to a tragedy like the death of 'Baby P' in Haringey (London) on their watch: the result is almost always a tightening of the processes and an increase in command and control – to 'grip' the crisis and prevent its recurrence. Of course, one of the consequences of such a centralized authoritarian response is that everyone in the organization responds by shifting all possible decisions upwards with a consequential increase in workloads of the very leaders who should only be reviewing the most 'at risk' children. In effect more children become at risk because of the risk avoidance strategies of all involved. We might usefully turn to Erich Fromm's (1942) *Fear of Freedom* to pursue this a little further, for he argues that we have an almost compulsive submission to authority as a result of Modernity which has uprooted people from communal relationships and generated an intolerable loneliness and consequent weight of responsibility. This fear drives us to seek solace in the protective arms of authority – fascist or democratic – because only that way could we avoid the fear generated by personal responsibility. This, in another context, is what Bauman (1993) calls, 'the unbearable silence of responsibility'.

Second, it is often in the interests of the media to portray situations as crises in order to sell more copy and thus induce higher levels of advertisements. Bonnie and Clyde would be an appropriate historical example of this – at a time when the American Depression was at its deepest the newspapers could sell more copy with headlines about daring bank robberies by desperate outlaws than by yet another story of an evicted dirt farmer (Guinn, 2009). The swine fever 'crisis' in the summer of 2009 was another example: on the 25th July 2009 the UK's *Daily Express* predicted that the fever would bring the British National Health Service to its knees. It didn't. In fact fewer people seemed to have died of Swine flu than the normal seasonal flu – but that didn't stop the paper for predicting the end of the medical world in the UK. Similarly, although we are regularly assailed with tales of imminent mass destruction at the hands of terrorists, according to the World Health Report (2008), the numbers of people killed by terrorists in the world each year is usually numbered in the hundreds, while the numbers killed in road traffic accidents, through smoking, via HIV/Aids or even diarrhoea is in the millions. [i] So 'The War on Diarrhoea' does not make the newspaper headlines, even though 'The War on Terror' regularly does. But we can't simply blame the media for this – if we didn't buy their

products they wouldn't be able to function in this way. So whatever 'they' do, 'we' are part of the problem.

Third, it may be that is there something about our love of excitement, our addiction to adrenalin, which conditions us to perceive many situations as crises. Thus out attempt to get beyond the mundaneness of everyday life propels us to escape into romantic fantasies of crisis and heroism. The double-headed nature of celebrity also occupies this space: we herald the new football manager or political leader – such as Barack Obama - as the charismatic messiah and are then surprised when they turn out to have what some might call feet of clay. We can also see this effect in the rash of 'instant leadership' books: if you haven't achieved significant changes in the first 90 days or whatever then you are self-evidently a failure (Bradt et al, 2009; Fisher, 2008; Robinson, 2004; Watkins, 1993).

Fourth, our attempts to distance ourselves from what Meindl et al (1985) called, 'the Romance of [Heroic] Leadership' seems to have led many to assume that some form of distributed leadership through partnership working is the solution to all our problems. But the evidence thus far suggests that distributed leadership is anything but a simple solution to a complex problem (Grint, 2010; Leonard, 2010) and the subsequent difficulties of making it work seem to have led many to resort to Command and Control in the face of collective congealment and indecision. In effect we seem to have replaced the Romance of Heroic Leadership with the Romance of Distributed Leadership and discovered that neither seems viable.

Finally, we seem to have a problem with Nietzschean Anxiety over the determination of causation. In other words, when situations appear both threatening and ambiguous we seem to demand a clear causal agency; because if we cannot establish this agency then 'the problem' is potentially irresolvable. Thus, for example, in Scott Snook's (2002) *Friendly Fire* (the accidental shooting down of US Blackhawks in Iraq), his conclusion is not that the pilots of the US fighters were to blame, or that the Blackhawk pilots were to blame, or that the 'system' was to blame, but that it was impossible to determine who or what was to blame - there was 'no bad guy… no smoking gun, no culprit.' In the presence of such a potential conclusion the tendency seems to be to dismiss the report and to find 'the culprit' by looking harder, not to accept the conclusion. In short, such intolerable Nietzschean Anxiety guides us back into the search for a commander to resolve the irresolvable crisis.

Is this why transformation – radical organizational or social change - is so difficult achieve – because we are usually allergic to it? That is to say, that our addiction to command simultaneously makes us allergic to the leadership that is required for sustainable transformation? If so how can we explain successful transformation? How, for example did Eastern Europe transform itself from an array of Soviet satellites to democratic states within such a short space of time? First, because the permanent crisis that pervaded the USSR and its satellites was indeed only addressed as a series of crises that were suppressed by soviet command the crisis persisted for decades. But the wicked problems

underlying the permanent crisis were not redressed by suppression and eventually catalysed a huge proportion of the various states until suppression by command became increasingly costly. In sequence, Gorbachev et al., realized that the old ways were a dead end, then in Poland the outlawed trade union Solidarity instigated a series of strikes in late 1988 that shook the government into re-legalizing it and engaging in talks with the opposition in February 1989 which were followed by multiparty elections in June that left the government without a place at the table. At the same time the Hungarian government announced an array of economic and political reforms that effectively ended the system without mass protests. In August 1989 there was a mass protest in the Baltic states and in September 60,000 East Germans escaped via Czechoslovakia across the now open Hungarian-Austrian border. On 9 October 1989 the East German militia refused to fire on the mass demonstration in Leipzig and a month later, on 9 November, the confused authorities bumbled their way into allowing the breach of the Berlin Wall. Just over a week later, on 17 November, the traditional Czech student commemoration of the death of Jan Opletal, a student leader killed by the Nazis, was attacked by the local police and the false rumour that Martin Smid (another student) had been killed, fuelled a mass protest and shortly thereafter the government had fallen. In Romania, following a police massacre of protesters in Timisoara, the 'loyalty' rally that Ceausescu had ordered for 21 December turned upon him and he was executed on 25 December.

Part of the Cuckoo Clock syndrome, then, is the elegant nature of the response. In the Soviet case a crisis 'obviously' demanded a command response because this was the rational – elegant – thing to do. But hidden within the elegant response is the incubus that prevents recognizing the crisis as a symptom of a deeper Wicked problem. And Wicked problems are usually addressed best through clumsy solutions that mix various elements in experimental 'solutions'. Thus the transformational solution to the permanent crisis of Eastern Europe was not the elegant Soviet Commander, nor could the Elegant standard operating procedures of the existing system continue as if it were merely a Tame problem. Instead the transformation required all kinds of Clumsy responses to occur simultaneously and right across the entire system.

The equivalent is to consider our attempts to rid ourselves of inner city poverty or educational underachievement or gang killings. The only successful attempts to transform these Wicked Problems seem to have been Clumsy. For example, *Operation Ceasefire* in Boston in 1995 sought to reduce the cities gun crime by targeted policing of a small number of prolific criminal gangs involved in gun crime. The results of this multiply threaded programme: over a dozen agencies were involved including the U.S. Attorney, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, the Suffolk County District Attorney as well as the Ten Point Coalition, a network of 43 black churches in the city (Allis, 1997)

However, despite a significant reduction in gang violence the programme was wound up in 2000 and partly as a consequence, gang violence re-emerged as a major problem. The conclusion is not that the programme did not work but, in the words of the retrospective review,

> To observers in the public management field, the unravelling of the so-called "Boston Miracle" may not be surprising. It is challenging to sustain effective collaborations over time. No one institution by itself can mount a meaningful response to complex youth violence problems. Institutions need to coordinate and combine their efforts in ways that could magnify their separate effects. There are strong reasons for relying on collaborations that span the boundaries that divide criminal justice agencies from one another, criminal justice agencies from human service agencies, and criminal justice agencies from the community. Such collaborations are necessary to legitimize, fund, equip, and operate complex strategies that are most likely to succeed in both controlling and preventing youth violence. The difficulty, however, is that collaborative efforts are expensive, fragile, and unreliable. It is very difficult to implement and sustain initiatives that draw on assets and capabilities distributed across different organizations. (Braga et al, 2008: 16-17).

Clearly, such an approach is not easy: it requires leaders to admit their own limited utility, to seek collaborative help, and to persuade followers that since they are part of the problem, they also have to be part of the solution. If Durkheim was right, such 'leadership' is dangerously necessary and necessarily dangerous. Perhaps Henrik Ibsen's play 'Enemy of the People' summarizes this dilemma best. In the play Stockmann is the Norwegian town doctor who tries to persuade the citizens that its new public baths – destined to bring in much needed business from tourists – has been contaminated and must be closed. The people, therefore, must take collective responsibility for protecting tourists by admitting the problem and sacrifice their financial gain for the greater good. In the event the town scapegoats Stockmann for his audacity and ostracises him. Here is captured the precise nature of the problem of Leadership – defined as engaging the collective in facing up to its collective problems – leaders are not heroic knights on horseback rescuing damsels in distress they are, like Stockmann, fighting both their own demons and the small-minded nature of their neighbours. This is necessary work, but it is not heroic because as the title reminds us, oftentimes leadership – as defined here - is not perceived by the people for the people but against the people. Indeed, leadership is often configured as 'the enemy of the people'.

Conclusion

This article considered the extent to which we are addicted to particular ways of configuring the world and responding in a culturally appropriate way. It expanded the original Tame and Wicked problems typology of Rittell and Webber (1973) to provide a heuristic for explaining

this addiction and then focused upon the most common approach – an addiction to Crises and Command. Amongst the most likely explanations for this addiction were the fear of failure and its associated twin – the fear of freedom; the role of the media – and our own part in their seduction of us; the predilection for the adrenaline of 'living in exciting times'; and finally our desperate attempt to escape the Nietzschean Anxiety of ambiguity – if we cannot explain the world, how can we control it? From the transformation of Eastern Europe to the resurgence of gun crime in Boston, our predilection for Crisis and Command often undermines our attempts to address Wicked problems adequately, and 'Leadership' – defined as persuading the collective to take responsibility for collective problems – is often regarded not just as difficult and dangerous, but as 'the enemy of the people'. Not only are we likely to be addicted to Command but we are also likely to be allergic to Leadership.

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[i] The 2008 World Health Report is available for download from: http://www.who.int/whr/2008/en/index.html