Developing a Methodology Exploring the Unknown in the Acquisition of Therapeutic Knowledge

by

Julia Cayne

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Department of Political, International and Policy Studies
School of Arts
University of Surrey

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For my daughters Joanne and Sarah in appreciation for making me see again and again the importance of the unknown in relationship with the other and along with my husband Richard for suffering with me.
Abstract

The aim of this study is to develop a methodology, through phenomenology, for exploring the unknown in the acquisition of therapeutic knowledge. An exploration is made of the way various writers attempt to explain the unknown raising a problematic about how the unknown can become defined as if known whereas others attempt to hold open the question of the unknown of the unknown. It is argued that learning places emphasis on knowing whereas in psychotherapy there is increasing interest in learning to tolerate doubt and uncertainty. Ten participants were interviewed in terms of the question: “how do psychotherapists learn about the unknown”? An empirical phenomenological method was utilised to translate a general descriptive structure of the phenomenon. Findings suggest learning about the unknown as acquired during a process of lifelong enquiry through interrelated experiences including: the known, training, therapy and supervision, practice and just living. Furthermore immersion in experiences and relationships highlighted recognition of the spiritual or mystical, opening up hope in the face of fear of death and repeated disillusionment, with realisation that no single theory explains everything. In detranslating findings, examples of a second analysis suggested that reverie seemed more helpful in exploring intersubjective phenomena, during interviews where the known of the researcher and participants was disrupted, compared to empirical psychological phenomenology which separates phenomenology from philosophy. Reverie was explored as an approach, which can attend more to aspects where something other than dialectic of birth and death has possibility, and the unknown emerges when one disrupts the intentional position of the other.
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1. **INTRODUCTION**

From the beginning this project takes a phenomenological stance being concerned with how things unfold to consciousness (Husserl 1923, Heidegger 1962, Merleau-Ponty 1962, 1964) whilst paradoxically being also concerned with the unknown. Whilst phenomenology is a theory and thus a position it is also a theory that questions theorising too early in an experience or investigation. Foucault (1972, 1986) proposes that transcendental phenomenology is problematic because it takes a linear view of the evolution of the subject and because of the way the epoche pares the subject from discourses that contribute to the constitution of the idea of a subject. In speaking of the death of the subject Foucault (1972, 1986) appears to call phenomenology into question. Hoeller (1986) however draws attention to the problem of operationalising phenomenology through phenomenological psychology arguing that Husserl did begin to recognise the importance of intersubjectivity. Whilst Merleau-Ponty (1962, 1963b) appears to continue the shift it is in fact unclear whether this shift is developed through the thought of Husserl or Levinas who was influential in bringing phenomenology to France (Loewenthal and Snell 2003) although Merleau-Ponty (eg 1962, 1964a) does not refer to Levinas. This project is seen as an opportunity to explore these difficulties within phenomenology and the way phenomenology has developed as a form of research. Rather than simply attempting a different method it is intended to work through and with the tensions caused in order to develop phenomenology and this is seen as worthwhile because of the way the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty is concerned with the unknown and intersubjectivity (1962, 1964b).

It is proposed that phenomenology will form the main methodological framework for this research and it is intended to explicate its influence throughout the various stages of the research represented in the chapters of this thesis. In chapter two, for example, the emergence of the research question through various experiences is undertaken whilst in chapters three and four the literature is reviewed in the form of exploration of the unknown and learning about the unknown. The process of that undertaking becoming a phenomenological enquiry as well as reviewing what has gone before in terms of the previous and current literature and research.
The title of this project "Developing A Methodology Exploring the Unknown in the Acquisition of Therapeutic Knowledge" involves finding a manageable way to explore the unknown in relation to psychotherapy. The main focus of this study is to consider the nature of therapeutic knowledge compared to other forms of knowledge. Then to explore how we can develop ways of researching what is difficult to speak of, thus cannot be taught and learned but which might be imparted and acquired in rather different ways, such as the unknown of our knowing as suggested by Polanyi (1966, 1969). There has been particular emphasis, within the field, on psychotherapists' ability to work with doubt, uncertainty and unknowing which is prevalent throughout the psychotherapy literature, from Freud (1953), Bion (1970), Castoriadis (1997), Kristeva (1983) and Ogden (1997). More recently Mieli (2004) challenged psychotherapists to "confront with the unknown including the unknown of one's vocation". Such unknowing is seen as the potential for creativity and a different way of thinking which results in unique ways of engaging with the other, whether colleagues, students or patients. In fact every case, in psychotherapy, is viewed by Mieli (2004) as "an exception that cannot be reduced to the generality of a diagnostic category". In addition previous work identified the difficulty of speaking about what leads therapists to being able to call themselves psychotherapists and suggested something unknown at play (Cayne 1998, Cayne and Loewenthal 2005). As a result this study will question how a concern with the known (for example in terms of how there is an assumption that learning takes place in a practice discipline, such as psychotherapy and counselling, through the teaching of known skills and concepts) as a dominant discourse within education generally, and psychotherapy specifically, actually subverts the acquisition of another kind of learning. Rather than being concerned with the explicitly taught psychotherapy requires the ability to work with the unique and changing milieu of a practice involving the relational. The terms Psychotherapy and Counselling will be viewed as interchangeable in this study.

This study is situated within the context of recent initiatives to improve standards in psychological services in both the United Kingdom and Europe including: Developments from The Psychotherapy Bill which was intended to result in state regulation of psychotherapy within the United Kingdom, being concerned with professional standards of practice and education (The Parliament Stationery Office 2001), "Treatment Choice in Psychological Therapies and Counselling" which argues
that such therapies should be supported by evidence based clinical practice guidelines (Department of Health 2001) and European initiatives to develop an ethical framework for practice which demonstrates a concern for professional competence (European Association for Psychotherapy 1999). These initiatives raise questions about whether education and training will become standardised and based on an assumption that competence can be demonstrated through a specified number of hours spent accumulating prescribed skills and knowledge. There is evidence of this in the European Certificate of Psychotherapy (EAP 1997) and the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy’s scheme for accreditation (BACP 2005). This approach to training and accreditation raises questions about what kind of education and training is currently available within a practice that has psychotherapeutic intent, the place therapeutic knowledge plays in current training schemes and what other approaches to teaching and learning would be appropriate within the context of psychotherapy. In other words should training be based only on what is demonstrable, as the known, or is something else, the unknown, also important and if so how and why? A major contention arises from the ideas of Heaton (2000) who argues that therapeutic knowledge cannot be taught and learned in traditional ways, indeed creative and thoughtful practice develops through self knowledge which it is often difficult to speak of but yet reveals itself through action (Heaton 2000).

This research is intended to provide an analysis of the function and role of the unknown in the context of learning about psychotherapy and as such it has broader implications for education generally and other practice disciplines specifically. The study will therefore: be of value to those entering psychotherapy training, assisting them to make informed choices about entry into the profession; be of practical value to those developing and providing psychotherapy training, regarding issues related to quality assurance and standards in psychotherapeutic education and practice; be of interest to educational policy makers, in the broader education context, where approaches to learning throughout life, the encouraging of creativity and imagination, and the fostering of an enquiring mind and love of learning are at issue, as in the ‘Learning Age Document’ (DFEE 1998); raise academic interest about the problematic of focussing on the known without acknowledgement of ways in which we are subject to the unknown.
Each chapter addresses a different aspect of the unknown in relation to the research question: "How do psychotherapists learn about the unknown?" Thus chapter two addresses the emergence of the field of research and the research question, chapter three explores ways of defining the unknown without defining, chapter four considers learning and the ways in which the unknown is addressed through learning in psychotherapy and chapter five provides a critical exploration of the implications of the unknown and phenomenology for methodology, epistemology and ontology as well as setting out the phenomenological research methods. Chapter six presents the translation of the research data using Giorgi’s (1985) phenomenological method with some adaptations from Becker (1992), chapter seven reviews the methodology through detranslation of the phenomenological method, making some recommendations for retranslating phenomenology in research by drawing more on reverie and draws conclusions about the implications of the research, both findings and method. The idea of translation-detranslation-retranslation comes from the ideas of Laplanche (1999) and summarises the way we construct and deconstruct meaning through the dimensions of time and interpersonal relationships, discussed further in chapters three and five.

The phenomenological investigation gets underway in chapter two where various experiences are shown to come together, over time, in unexpected ways leading to an interest in the field of study, the unknown and a number of associated questions. This chapter can already be seen to be influenced through phenomenology in the way experiences are opened up and questioned in different ways rather than simply being incorporated into existing theoretical schemata or rejected out of hand, (for example Merleau-Ponty 1962, 1964, Laing 1967). Whether one views phenomenology from the transcendentlal perspective with its concern for understanding through intentionality (Husserl 1923, 1929) or the hermeneutic (Heidegger 1962, Gadamer 1989) which attempts to acknowledge the researcher’s lived place in the world there is need to at least attempt to explicate what the researcher’s position is and from the beginning. Chapter two offers a condensation (Freud 1915 in Gay 1995) of some issues which lead to the current field of study and which are then expanded as the project progresses. This chapter also, therefore, illustrates how the researcher’s experiences and perception are engaged in this project. In the process the relational aspects of research also begin to be explicated in terms of the researcher’s interaction
with others as well as the interplay between various theoretical and methodological positions. For example, the interplay between: life and death, transcendental and hermeneutic phenomenology, therapist and patient, knowing and unknowing. By the end of this chapter it also became clear that the exploration of the unknown needed to be set within a clear context and given the importance of education and training it was decided that the exemplar for exploring the unknown would be how psychotherapists learn about the unknown and whether and what role they see the unknown, enigmatic domain plays in their practice. It will then be possible to open up questions of how dominant discourses associated with knowing subvert and are subverted by the unknown, enigmatic, which becomes positioned as a discourse of the other.

In chapter three the phenomenological investigation continues through exploration of the unknown from a phenomenological perspective which is then juxtaposed in turn, with psychoanalysis, existentialism and post modern writing in order to provide an inter relational critique of each theoretical perspective. The literature in these areas is considered in order to explore various ways of phenomenologically defining the unknown without defining it, conceptualising it without attempting to fix it, as the unknown will always be contextual within time. Essentially this chapter is more interested in the ways in which various writers have approached questions of the emergence of the unknown as opposed to a common way of understanding the unknown which is also more in the spirit of phenomenology. What are the commonalities and what are the differences in opening up ways of exploring the unknown and how might they go on to inform methodological issues? The knot of knowing (Freud 1953, Derrida 1998), for example, leads to substitutions through language for the unspeakable (Lacan 1977, Merleau-Ponty1973, Saussure 1983), or raises ethical concerns about enigma as a concern with what the other wants, for example of therapist, teacher or researcher (Laplanche 1999); as involving discourses that subvert and destabilise the known (Kristeva 1974 Irigaray 1999) and subsequently demand ways of researching that do not simply replay the dominant discourses which are propagated and selectively disseminated by educational institutions as identified by Foucault (1980). A major difficulty is that the unknown exists only as inference and once known is no longer unknown or is only known through the creation of disturbance, such as a breakdown in the symbolic structure. Such modes of experiencing, it is argued, require an ethical approach based on the
relational, which does not seek to reduce experience to theory, unlike the biological or physiological which are demonstrable, provable or observable. The problematic of a tendency to explain the known of the unknown (eg Freud 1915, 1923, Bion 1962, 1970, Lacan 1977a, 1977b) compared to ways of attempting to hold open the question of the unknown of the unknown (eg Kierkegaard 1944, 1956, Derrida 1978, 1990, Levinas 1983, 1984, Irigaray 1996, 1999) is demonstrated.

The phenomenological enquiry is continued in chapter four where the ways in which education in general approaches questions of the unknown as well as in the particular case of psychotherapy. The unknown is itself often only inferred or mentioned in passing (Knowles 1990, Boud 1993, Mezirow 1991, Schon 1983) although there are exceptions where explicit attention is given such as in the work of Brew (1993) and Polanyi (1966, 1969). Some literature is therefore reviewed in order to consider ways in which learning about the unknown of the unknown, as identified in the previous chapter, may have implications for learning to be a psychotherapist. Aspects of the unknown of the unknown are shown to emerge through the interrelated aspects of learning such as culture (Habermas 1987), being as implicated through the tacit dimension (Polanyi 1966, 1969) and experience (Boud 1993). One of the problems with a study of the unknown is that it is frequently mentioned throughout a wide range of literature, philosophical and psychoanalytic as well as educational. There is, however, a paucity of literature focussing specifically on the unknown, especially in terms of published research with the exception of Pramling et al (2003) which is also reviewed.

Within the psychotherapeutic literature the dominant discourse related to learning appears to be based on a technical rational, positivist paradigm where knowing can be demonstrated, for example through goals and outcome measures such as contact hours and learning outcomes based on cognitive, practical and affective elements. This can be seen in accreditation criteria and training standards of various professional bodies (BACP 2005, BPS 2001, 2004, EAP 1997, UKCP 2005). It is argued that whilst this appears to be the case there is another kind of discourse that has been recognisable historically, for example Freud (Felman 1987) argued for a kind of training based on experience of one’s own unknowing albeit in the form of the unconscious. Post Freudians such as Bion (1962, 1970) and Winnicott (1970, 1990) argued for the
ability to tolerate uncertainty and paradox. Existential, phenomenological psychotherapists went on to question the way knowing in the form of theoretical knowing could hinder the ability to form a therapeutic relationship because theory becomes the focus for diagnosing rather than attempting to understand the patient in context and the experience in relationship (Laing 1967, 1969, Boss 1963, Rogers 1951, 1961). The contemporary psychotherapeutic literature also reflects a growing concern with different forms of knowing calling for wisdom, maturity and ability to respond to the ineffable and uniqueness of each therapeutic encounter (Abrahams 1995, Bolas 1987, 1999, Eigen 1998, Gordon 1999, Heaton 2000, 2004 Hillman 1997, Laing 1967, 1969, Quinodoz 2003). The emphasis of this second part of chapter four is on the kinds of learning associated with experience in relationship, through an existential phenomenological perspective and the growing paradigm shift visible in contemporary psychotherapeutic literature.

The analyses of chapters three and four then lead to a questioning of the way the unknown reveals itself through methods that despite beginning with the known can allow the unknown to come towards us whilst we tolerate the accompanying anxiety of unknowing. The unknown cannot be found by directly seeking it. Chapter five thus consider the implications of these aspects of the unknown for epistemology, ontology and methodology in researching the unknown. This includes discussion of the relevance of qualitative approaches in exploring indeterminate, inferential and contextual phenomena (Van Maanen 1983) which are more suited to descriptive approaches (Giorgi 1985) compared to the quantitative paradigm as concerned with demonstrating causal relationships or testing hypotheses related to stable or known social phenomena (Silverman 2000). The implications of the nature of the unknown, as generating anxiety, are then explored for methodology and ideas about reverie are shown to have potential for both noticing and allowing thought in the face of such anxiety (Bion 1962, 1970, Ogden 1997). Thus reverie is shown to have implications for the relational aspects of researching the unknown because it is concerned with poetic imagination which according to Bachelard (1994) is the birthplace of the speaking subject. Reverie is also seen as a way of operationalising and clarifying the process of communication between researcher and research participants during data collection as well as the interpretive aspects of data analysis. Again the uncertainty opened up by reverie leads to recognition of the importance of an epistemology of
ethics (Levinas 1984, 1997) pragmatic artistry (Dewey 1929, Schon 1991, 1992) and deconstruction (Foucault 1972, 1986, Derrida 1976, 1978) because of the way they can allow the kinds of knowing that are provisional and contextual and therefore more open to the unknown. The above discussion then opens up the way for a review of the strengths and limitations of existing phenomenological research methods, in particular that of Giorgi (1975, 1985). This includes questioning of the extent to which this method can be seen to be apposite with Merleau-Ponty’s (1962) phenomenology which is essentially concerned with investigating the unknown and associated issues such as the inter relational.

As methodology also addresses practical questions about the methods for data collection and analysis as well as selection of participants to be involved (Kvale 1996) the chosen research method and its adaptations will be explicated in order to show how it will guide the intended data collection, the selection of participants and related ethical issues and data analysis. Such operational issues are also referred to as the research design and will be discussed in relation to the research question "how do psychotherapists learn about the unknown?" The method of Giorgi (1975, 1985) is explicated with some adaptations from Becker (1992). This study is not, however, intended to provide a generalizable explanation of the unknown in terms of representativeness (eg Black 1993) but rather in terms of possibility (Peraklya 2004) and to highlight implications for developing methodology for further future exploration. It is also not intended to replay the already said of grand narratives but an attempt to remain open to the experience of the unknown through reverie which influences the way epistemological, ontological and methodological issues inform the methods of data collection and analysis and questions of validity and reliability.

In chapter six the data is presented based on the stages of a phenomenological method outlined by Giorgi (1975, 1985) with some adaptations from Becker (1992). The result of reading through transcribed interviews, discrimination of meaning units and summary of their salient features is presented for one participant in table two and the remainder in appendix three. These meaning units and their salient features were utilised to construct individual portraits for each participant which are then presented. The data analysis subsequently moves away from individual life worlds in order to present a general descriptive structure of the phenomenon "how do psychotherapists
The shift away from the individual was enabled by drawing on Giorgi’s (Eckarsberg 1998) second question for explicating the data adapted in terms of this research question as “how did learning about the unknown take place”? Asking this question opened up the researcher to all kinds of phenomena that hindered or helped learning which included, for example, the participants’ own attitudes and values. The salient features and meanings of stages two and three were reviewed so that gradually a number of key themes began to emerge. Each meaning unit was then cut and pasted into these themes until the process was complete for all ten participants. Each theme is presented along with quotations from the participants in order to illustrate something of the variety of experiences within each theme. The themes are: “The unknown from the known,” “The unknown from training,” “The unknown from personal therapy and supervision,” “The unknown in practice,” “Life and living,” “The spiritual/mystical unknown” and “Fear of death”. Whilst Wertz (1985) clarifies the processes involved in the explication of the data the researcher found this to be a more mysterious process raising further questions about how we engage with data in order to understand it and present it to others. Another unknown emerges as the researcher’s unknowing of their own learning process in the research.

Having presented the data in chapter six the research method is detranslated (after Laplanche 1999) in chapter seven by providing some examples of what has been concealed previously. The detranslation is based on the epistemological considerations outlined in chapter five which require acknowledgement of the instability and contemporaneousness of knowledge found in: the pragmatic epistemology of Schon (1992) and Dewey (1929); Derrida’s (1978) approach to demonstrating and subverting attempts to stabilise knowledge and; an ethical approach to epistemology that questions the effects of understanding on otherness (eg Levinas 1984). This detranslation addresses firstly the relationship between researcher and researched in order to provide some illustrations of how one disrupts the other’s discourse revealing what was concealed by the phenomenological method utilised in chapter six. The way power threads its way through the interaction begins to provide clues to the story within the story revealing some aspects of some things that were concealed. Reverie was found to be helpful in revealing the interpersonal nature of phenomena. These issues then have implications for developing phenomenological research methods. Secondly the relationship between
phenomenology and phenomenological research methods is explored where the empirical phenomenological method of Giorgi (1985a:11) appears to rest on a fault line where it is assumed that "one cannot analyze a whole text simultaneously, one has to break it down into manageable units". It is then suggested that phenomenology is already a method that requires the very opposite which is also requisite of the free floating attention for reverie (Bion 1970, Ogden 1997). It is further suggested that interviews precipitate the eternal return as highlighted by Blanchot (1993) through meta narrative as a story presumed to have generability (Lytard 1984) and metadiscourse as the way we speak about events in order to hold to a specific discourse community (Vande Kopple 1985). Recommendations for developing phenomenology in research are then made. Firstly the need to explore reverie in ways where research does not end up returning learning about the unknown to the known such as in meta narratives or grand narratives like the unconscious and; secondly exploring alternative ways, to interviewing, of gathering data. One area for consideration would be participant or non participant observation as developed through anthropology and approaches to ethnography and where, for example, Foucault (1980) argues power and historicity are not bracketed out. This is because Ethnography is concerned with first hand observation of the interaction within groups set within their cultural context (Moustakas 1994).

In conclusion questions of what the research revealed about learning about the unknown in psychotherapy and how this has informed the development of a methodology for exploring the unknown is discussed. The research was intended to provide findings that have possibility and to highlight how such findings might help the development of a methodology. Participants described how a number of interrelated experiences, contribute to a lifelong journey in which ultimately we come to face death. These include: the known of theory, aspects of training, therapy and supervision, practice and life and living. Detranslation of the findings of chapter six led to another way to read the above findings through reverie, where multiple readings illustrate the instability of meaning between the researcher and participants. Thus the researcher participant relationship can be seen to evoke the unknown. Interviews, as a way of collecting data for exploring the unknown, also seemed to contribute to evocation of the very difficulties being spoken about. The collapses in meaning which appeared to be to do with experiencing the unknown were less noticeable in the
data analysis using the empirical phenomenological research method (Giorgi 1975, 1985a) because it was found to deal more with the known than viewing the unknown as a phenomenon. The development of phenomenology through reverie within an ethnographic approach is suggested as a way of revealing how meaning is disrupted or stabilised in social settings as a living experience. Some examples of data analysis, drawing on reverie also began to highlight a way of analysing the text at the level of discourse and it is suggested that discourse analysis (e.g. Potter 1997) may be another route to developing reverie as methodology. Finally the allegorical nature of this study is acknowledged and the comparison between Giorgi’s (1975, 1985a) method and reverie (Bion 1970, Ogden 1997) demonstrates how each is telling a different kind of story, addressing different kinds of phenomena and each proposes how to do research with competing claims for legitimacy.
2. BETWEEN THE UNKNOWN AND THE EMERGENCE OF PSYCHOTHERAPEUTIC RESEARCH QUESTIONS

2.1 Introduction

This chapter illustrates how my experiences and perception are engaged in this project through the opening up and exploration of experiences from a phenomenological position. In the process a number of relational aspects to the field of research also begin to be explicated in terms of the researcher's interaction with others as well as the interplay between various theoretical and methodological positions. Seemingly fragmented experiences can open up, rather than close down, ideas and ways of thinking and in turn illustrate how such experiences may influence the process of research in terms of the development of the field of research and research questions. Research questions are generally viewed as being predominantly informed by theory with the unknown being a temporary state of affairs which drives the research (Silverman 2000). However this chapter questions these ideas in two ways: firstly in terms of the role of experience, rather than theory alone in generating and informing research ideas and secondly in arguing something of the nature of the unknown as generating anxiety which inhibits thought. The unknown is viewed as a continuing factor that impels research in unrecognised ways and as such it inhabits the evolving research questions.

The discussion will consider how the opening of the space between leaves us in the unknown, caught between fragments, in turn generating anxiety and a need for closure, a pre-emptive ending. This chapter, therefore, takes a different approach and rather than setting the field of study within a purely theoretical or even practice based context draws on a much wider view of experience. Thus fragments of personal, practice based and theoretical experiences are shown to influence research. The intention is to highlight how these fragmented experiences of the researcher are not just a variable to be highlighted in terms of their impact on the study, that is the background to the research, but instead are a part of the very matter of the research itself.
Further the realisation that by attending to such experiences the forgotten, lost, suspended and unknown can be shown to play a part in psychotherapeutic research and in particular in the generation of research questions. Indeed experiences that are discarded often resurface in ways we can prefer to ignore, as will be illustrated here.

One example of the lost were ideas generated by reading a paper which proposed that the theoretical constructs of psychoanalysis are 'interpersonal rather than intrapsychic' phenomena, a prime example being the unconscious (Oakley 1989:4). This proposition initially suggested two research hypotheses: firstly the play of the unconscious happens between, through language and, secondly the unconscious is therefore not an entity located inside, we are in unconsciousness. These statements were written some time ago, at the outset of an earlier research project, but ignored because they seemed too complex to problematise but in fact they are probably emerging again here for reasons that may begin to crystallise.

Thus, seemingly disparate experiences sometimes come together in previously unthought-of ways drawing attention to something that seemed irrelevant or perhaps even strange, so that it can be seen anew. One could say that it leads to a new synthesis although this raises a question of whether we are thus always doomed to the dialectic of thesis, antithesis and synthesis as attributed to Hegel (Pinkard 2004) which could be seen as a way of closing the gap in order to avoid discontinuity and the unbearable (Blanchot 1993). For Kierkegaard this unbearable is dread, the dread of freedom which thwarts possibility (Kierkegaard 1944 in Freidman 1991) whilst for Blanchot the closure is the silencing of the reminder of death (1993). No space dares to be left in case the possible as enigmatic, unknowable reminds us of the taboo of the dead.

The experiences cited in this chapter include previous research, thoughts, readings and situations, interactions with students, colleagues, patients, friends and family which also draw attention to the relational nature of psychotherapeutic knowledge and research questions.
2.2 Previous Research

A previous Action Research project which explored the process of developing a portfolio with a small group of qualified nurses highlighted the way learning was seen as only being related to certificated study rather than valuing of experience as learning (Cayne 1995). As the group worked together, reflecting on past experiences (e.g., Schon 1987) they began to recognise some blocks to their learning which included aspects of the environment within which they found themselves studying and working. The study also raised questions about how individuals viewed themselves, in particular how anxiety was generated by thinking about difficult experiences which were perceived as threatening to self (Cayne 1995).

The relevance of that study here is connected to the notion of experience as learning and what hinders or blocks learning from experience, in other words what is the anxiety about? Linking this research with reflective learning led to a recognition that an emphasis on technical rational forms of knowledge could lead to devaluing of knowledge generated from experience supported for example by Powell (1989). In addition various authors recognised how experiential or reflective forms of learning generate anxiety, in part due to the requirement to question oneself (Brookfield 1986, Boyd and Fales 1983). Schon takes this even further suggesting that professional artistry comes from plunging into the uncertainty and anxiety of learning from experience more even, plunging into the unknown (Schon 1987). He further highlights the futility of trying to tell anyone how to do something, pointing out the need, from the beginning, to be immersed in the experience and states:

"The teachers cannot tell them. The teachers can say things to them but they cannot understand what's meant at that point. The way at which they come to be able to understand what's meant is by plunging into the doing...... so as to have the kinds of experience from which they may then be able to make some sense of what it is that's being said. But the plunge is full of loss because, if you've taken that plunge yourself, you know the experience. You feel vulnerable; you feel you don't know what you're doing; you feel out of control; you feel incompetent; you feel you've lost confidence. And that is the environment in which you swim around." (Schon 1987).
It seems that Schon is inferring too that the loss is anticipated even before the learning and this seems to suggest that the mourning fore-stalls before we can even begin.

A later phenomenological study which explored therapists’ experiences of feeling ready to call themselves psychotherapists highlighted the difficulty of speaking about experience of the uncertainty in knowing how psychotherapy actually works (Cayne 1998). Thus something unknown was at play! A further difficulty that concerned participants was how you know if you are any good at psychotherapy especially if your criteria for deciding this are about having a relationship with the other rather than knowing a theory. In fact some subjects suggested that the need for theory was a way of assuring certainty in order to avoid the anxiety of not knowing. Sass (1992) however questioned whether utter scepticism is any more helpful than absolute certainty and how each are a position taken up from which to safely view the world, perhaps a fantasy that it is possible to step above or out of it. This raises questions about how we position ourselves in research, or to put it another way, where in the world are we? Another issue was to what extent the empirical phenomenological research method could help or hinder the exploration of the difficult state of uncertainty and unknowing (the researcher’s and the research subjects’) both during the interviews and the analysis of the data. In addition research by Sawatzky et al (1996) had highlighted the role of dissonance in development as a therapist, an area that now seems worth further thought in relation to the effects of uncertainty and the unknown.

As the above research progressed there was also a question of whether some phenomenological methods, (eg Giorgi 1985) do not consider how language both constructs and destroys meaning in the same breath (Lacan 1979). They perhaps present the analysis of data through categories or units of meaning which seems to be an attempt to pinpoint or stabilise meaning, the participants’ language being used as a fixed entity that somehow duplicates reality or their experience. Silverman (2000:70) suggests that such reductionism can become an attempt ‘to reduce the complexities of the social
world to a single variable.’ The complexity of context seems to be crucial here, for example the backgrounds and experience of the researcher and researched, the choice of research question, the setting for the data collection and the relationship between, such as, interviewer and interviewee. It seems important to recognise how such contextual issues impact on the study perhaps even becoming part of the process. In the above study, for example, the impact of uncertainty and ambiguity that are already embedded in experience and therefore language, are vital to the research field. In contradiction to the researcher’s experience Kvale sees Giorgi’s method as apposite with the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty (Kvale 1992). There is a need, therefore, to further explore these inconsistencies in phenomenological research methods, for example, by considering these experiences as context alongside the text. It could be suggested that as a precursor to post modern thought Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology is already a method that recognises the instability of language (Kvale 1992) and indeed calls to us to attend to phenomena that do not seem to fit stating:

“...I ought to be ceaselessly taking apart misleading syntheses and reinstating stray phenomena which I had excluded in the first place. But this does not happen. The real is a closely woven fabric. It does not await our judgement before incorporating the most surprising phenomena, or before rejecting the most plausible figments of our imagination.” (Merleau-Ponty 1962:x)

From this statement comes the idea that we incorporate or reject too quickly based on our existing focus or question. In the above research (Cayne1998) what was more difficult to notice or write of was the experience of being almost unable to speak in the interviews, perhaps triggered by the nature of the question which was whether or not the individuals’ felt ready to call themselves psychotherapists and what factors influenced that. The question became context. Yet, on reflection, is beginning with a question not itself problematic, although this is the accepted starting point for qualitative research in general (Silverman 2000) and methodologies such as phenomenology (Moustakas 1994) and discourse analysis (Potter and Wetherall 1987). A question can, however, take us away from hearing anything that is confusing or that we might not want to hear because it always infers ‘an-other’ answer or answers a different question, perhaps inferring an
unknown other, an unknown question. There is a question here of the nature of questions in research and whether we always need begin with one and whether it needs to remain fixed and unchangeable no matter what.

Bound up in the problematic of questions is a questioning of how we decide what to attend to or ignore in psychotherapeutic practice and research. The undertaking and especially the writing up of qualitative research, seems to veer madly between these poles. Do we not immediately begin to engage in a process of: assimilating what is acceptable (to our selves or the institution for example) in terms of what we read, what questions we ask, what methods suit our purpose and what is said or experienced by the participants, or too quickly discarding what is strange or alien. Neither one of these positions enable us to engage in thought because when we think we control and stabilise our thoughts we lose sight of how we are skewing the ideas to our own ends losing sight of the other.

Is it possible to be open to research that is relational, open to 'an other' kind of thought that Merleau-Ponty proposes can occur when someone speaks to us:

"People can speak to us only a language which we already understand, each word of a difficult text awakens in us thoughts which were ours beforehand, but these meanings sometimes combine to form new thought which recasts them all, and we are transported to the heart of the matter, we find the source. Here there is nothing comparable to the solution of a problem, where we discover an unknown quantity through its relation with known ones." (Merleau-Ponty 1962:178).

Thus for Merleau-Ponty (1962) problem based research, which stems from hypotheses or questions will always depend on the known, even the unknown then rests on the known but the mystery of the world, the unknown, occurs elsewhere. Where is elsewhere, not the text but outside it or between it, hence attention will now be given to the notes outside the main text.

In thinking about writing up the above research project it was striking to see how different the notes kept during the journey through the research seemed to be from the final written draft for the MSc in Counselling and Psychotherapy. It would be easy to discard these fragmented thoughts and ideas. Around the same time, however, my attention was drawn to the importance of what is
written along the way, in the margins, between the lines, by my daughter who is studying law. We had several discussions about a legal concept which demonstrates the value placed on such notes in legal judgements.

"Obiter dictum" means 'notes made in passing' and refers to the comments or notes made by a judge in coming to a judgement (Martin 1997). Not only is the final judgement published but also the judge's comments that were not essential to a decision. Such comments can be cited in future cases, not as binding, but as 'persuasive authority'. These notes are not the law but part of how a decision about the law was arrived at, they are outside the law, in a sense, and yet intricately related to it. So here already is a precedent for the importance of passing notes! Attention is also drawn to the meaning of obiter as Latin for journey or road and as 'by the way'. We often say 'by the way' as though it is an after thought that is some how of less importance than the main conversation although Freud too recognised the importance of such throw away remarks (Freud 1991). Obit means decease, die or commemorate the dead or as is sometimes said of the dying – their passing away (Hoad 1996). Also there is a sense of pass as to go through or pass muster (Hoad 1996) perhaps referring to what we have to go through to pass an academic course, or become a psychotherapist that includes the passing of time, and our needing time to pass through. Are the 'by the way' comments that hint of something outside, a reminder of mourning, even before the thought is formed we would rather pass over.

In turn the word 'note' resonates in any number of ways; hence note as mark, sign, character or abstract. Notes as a form of writing are somewhat different to articles such as this or research dissertations, they are often seen as less, which they are in a quantitative sense but perhaps they just catch a hint of something different. In fact more deliberate writing or indeed verbatim accounts do not catch things in passing, those elusive ideas that drift by. Thomas Ogden writes of such moments when a hint of something appears, and asks how we might attune ourselves to be more receptive by asking not what was said (or written) but what was it like to be in the presence of the other (Ogden 1997). He explores how their words may or may not convey
something of this experience and how hearing can be little to do with what was actually being said in a literal sense. We might also consider this in relation to ourselves and how we can be more receptive to our own experience. Laing (1967) questioned the ways in which our own experiencing is negated, not least by theories which become re-placed between people so that what is actually experienced is lost and 'if our experience is destroyed we have lost our own selves' (p12). So how might we listen to ourselves and others? Note is then referred to as distinction, notice, regard. So how do we attune ourselves to this other kind of listening which is a requirement to notice, have due regard, the distinction being perhaps a different way of thinking too.

Listening also infers sound and so what of the notes themselves, note as musical sound, sound of a certain pitch, melody. Ogden rephrases such attunement as 'an imagining ear' which seems to mean an attunement to the ways of moving in the world of the other, through how I move in the world in relation to them (Ogden 1997). Such presence means aliveness rather than deadness to the other. He asks us to be alive to various forms of deadness as well as aliveness in relationship. This aliveness isn’t created by being able to play the notes such that they become a predictable, well rehearsed (research) exercise but by being able to make music which involves going beyond the notes because there is space for something unexpected to happen and thus become a different experience each time. There is a sense here of something emerging that can’t be pre-scribed (to use Ogden’s words) and if it is it forecloses the experience. In addition Ogden’s ideas about the relationship in psychotherapy forming a third ‘I’ (Ogden 1997) has elements of an intertwining and the therapist’s reverie enables them to draw on what is happening in this intersubjective experience or space. In a sense calling the relationship an ‘I’ or intersubjective third could also be seen to be another example of something being placed between rather than being able to leave the space between, bear the absence, nature it seems still abhors a vacuum! For Winnicott awareness of such a space between or transitional space creates a shock, or anxiety again because of the reminder of loss (Winnicott 1986).
Remembering that Freud (along with Husserl) attended lectures by Brentano, the harbinger of phenomenology, led to a connection between such passing notes and ‘free association’ which for Freud was the technique of encouraging the patient to say whatever came to mind (Freud 1973). The idea being that blocks to free association indicate points of resistance which can be interpreted in order to free up the patient from defences that inhibit unconscious elements becoming conscious.

So there is a precedent in law for attending to what is written (or thought) in passing, by the way, as part of the journey, which seems more in tune with the spirit of a phenomenological approach to recognising potential areas for research in psychotherapy. Attending in this way is methodical in ways that no method can be because it requires us to allow the odd, the strange, the out of place and even the mysterious a voice.

Passing notes or free association are thus connected to phenomenology. Interestingly, according to Hoad (1999), the roots of the word phenomenon, are from the Greek phainomenon, which includes the meaning pass: pass as passage, pass between, go by, through or beyond. Thus phenomenology is concerned with the journey between, through an unknown space, but the pas is also the not. That is in a sense what is left or lost between, between bits of knowing (such as questions, categories or units of meaning), between the lines or left in the margins as well as what is outside, or knowing beyond our ken. Phenomenology includes a concern with the mysterious.

“The world and reason are not problematical. We may say if we wish that they are mysterious, but their mystery defines them: there can be no question of dispelling it by some ‘solution’ it is on the hither side of all solutions.” Merleau-Ponty (1962:xx)

It was the reading of Merleau-Ponty (eg 1962, 1964) that helped find the words to name the idea of the unknown as a focus of psychotherapeutic research, both as a field of research and as informing phenomenological research, which like psychotherapy is not a well defined, often rehearsed or predictable path. We need to able to be surprised. The term phenomenological research method is therefore unnecessary, phenomenology is already that but it requires attentiveness and something of a transgression. Our thoughts need
to be allowed to wander beyond research questions or hypotheses and their solving.

2.3 Other Experiences

It is always difficult to show the complexity of learning and indeed this paper could be seen to be a linear chain of events but of course the various experiences were often running alongside or disjointed from each other. It is difficult, given the nature of language, at least in the symbolic register, to show the synchronicity or disjuncture of experiencing. The unknown can never be about a series of relations that are “direct, symmetrical or reversible, [they] will not form a whole, and will not take place in a same time” (Blanchot 1993:7). Thus researching the unknown requires a concern with a language of curvature and the relations between fragments of experience will not then be directly provable but will draw attention through discontinuity and a concern with “difference and tension” (Blanchot 1993:7). The experiences here are an attempt to illustrate wandering and wondering about the unknown rather than trying to problematise it as an hypothesis or research question.

An experience where a group of students were trying to tell the story of an African woman who whilst living in a foreign land told her new friends that she had a snake in her stomach. The audience thought the woman must be mad but as the story was presented some of the woman’s meanings gradually emerged and the importance of culture along with it. As someone said “you never know when meaning is done” and in the space created by unknowing we label as mad that which we do not understand.

Therapeutic practice is also infused with unknowing. A patient once said that his judgement of whether helping was effective was based on criteria such as “body of knowledge, quality, and validation of results.” He also wanted an answer to his challenge, or question and if one was not forthcoming it meant nothing was happening. As it happened not arguing or battling with him he opened up how he despised the passivity, but also felt challenged, in fact women presented him with a problem because he wondered whether women
made better therapists and indeed why that might be so but it was, he said, a mystery to him.

The initial understanding of this patient’s comments about women were as an attack that reflected his dislike or fear of women but this attempt was at best a partial understanding which is problematic because it fails to acknowledge the patient’s attempts to figure out what women are about. Is he actually asking something like Freud’s famous question – what does a woman want, and of me as a man (Laplanche 1999)? From this relationship emerges an ethical question of how to respond to the question; to the known (as in our theoretical understanding) or the unknown, and how do we learn this kind of responsiveness – in this case to the unknown other. There also seem to be a number of links between the visible and the invisible; firstly a concern with the external/structure/knowledge/evidence (the phallus) and secondly the fear of women who represent passivity, mystery, unknown, and according to Lacan, lack (Bowie 1991). This patient’s way of being seemed to operate from fear of this unknown other (the lack or absence) leading him to both admire and denigrate women, and in order to be able to hear his story it would have been helpful to also recognise his genuine puzzlement about women and indeed himself in relation to women. This would require the therapist to be able to wait with the uncertainty (mostly their own) and the resulting activities employed by the patient to avoid his anxiety. But when faced with not understanding our own difficulties are quickly highlighted; whose lack is it anyway?

Another patient often said she could not think of anything and had nothing to say. Being with her was almost unbearable at times and led to wondering whether she was right and had nothing on her mind. Towards the end of working together she spoke of a fancy dress outfit she had made for one of her children and how she had collected various items from junk shops and said she had ‘made something out of nothing’ which seemed to indicate her belief that she had nothing on her mind. But out of nothing something is possible, for example in Bion’s terms that something was coming out of the no-thing, the undifferentiated space prior to language, which is not the same as nothing
In other words she was discovering that she did have her own thoughts and feelings with which she began to play.

Mostly the work with this patient was about differance as in Derrida’s definition both ‘to differ’ as difference and ‘to defer’ as to put off in time, wait, postpone presence (eg Derrida 1978). Derrida saw the interplay between these two meanings as ultimately leading to an aporia – or something that means neither one thing or the other or both at the same time. In other words the play of language leads to a continual slipping from one thing to another the instability and continual uncertainty open up differences along the way. But is the idea of slippage just another form of linearity, you slip, or pass, from one thing to the next as though there is nothing else, nothing between the slips. The nature of the slip as a between is lost. Slip as pass lightly, quickly or quietly, a semi-liquid mass, semi liquid cementing material. It is the cement that holds it together and lets it slide apart but on this we remain quiet! Is this then something of the semiotic register (eg Kristeva 1974 in Moi 1986) which precedes language or evidence but involves waiting in the mess! If one is able to wait with this process of unknowing there are moments, often a kind of playful punning, that manages to speak the unspeakable, and means several things at once.

In fact whilst I was preparing a paper on the therapeutic relationship the very difficulty of speaking of this in a direct way emerged along with the possibility of inferring by fables or stories. Having given up the struggle and gone for a walk along the Thames we became intrigued by the ducks swimming in a swollen and fast flowing river. Our attention was caught by a duck who was struggling, having been caught by the current. Suddenly she seemed to momentarily give up and go with the current and then it seemed a very simple task to just swim to the river bank. This is a reminder of the way Bion (1970) draws on the writings of John Keats on ‘negative capability’ and how instead of staying with uncertainty and unknowing we keep reaching for something, or for the next meaning. He points out that the psychoanalyst needs:
...to be aware of the aspects of the material that, however familiar they may seem to be, relate to what is unknown to him and to the analysand. Any attempt to cling to what he knows must be resisted for the sake of achieving a state of mind.....patience....... I mean the term to retain its association with suffering and tolerance of frustration. (Bion 1970:124)

Perhaps an interesting area for research is: what is the experience of this kind of patience and what is the irritability? And indeed how might such waiting inform psychotherapeutic research? Waiting coincides with possibility and Kierkegaard saw the possible as corresponding to dread and 'precisely' so, and being open to the possible means being 'educated by dread' (Kierkegaard 1944 in Friedman 1991:370). Thus the possible, that is synonymous with dread, is unbearable. How could it be possible to speak with anyone in or of dread? So why are these questions not just more questions that require the seeking of a solution? It is not that we shouldn't ask such questions but rather that we need to await a response, and a response is different to the answer. The response might infer a limit but yet opens infinite possibility whereas we speak of having the answer which suggests it was there all the time.

One final area that drew attention was a statement made by David Blunkett, the then secretary of State, in The Learning Age consultation document (DFE 1998). In this document he stated how 'learning throughout life will build on human capital by encouraging the acquisition of knowledge and skills and emphasising creativity and imagination' (DFE 1998:1). What is interesting in this statement is a question of whether a focus on acquisition of skills and knowledge is congruent with the idea of emphasising creativity and imagination. This question arose because of experiences as practitioner, lecturer and researcher whereby it was frequently experienced that creativity does not generally come when we think we know something but when we can allow the anxiety and fears and with them some disconcerting thoughts. In other words creative work does not arise out of knowing alone. Creative thought arises out of a space between, but the nature of that space is uncertain and creates anxiety. Nevertheless without that space all we get is a foreclosure, a return to the centre where some choose what is thought or
indeed what is asked. Irigaray quotes Heidegger and then queries his assertion:

"‘The task of thinking would then be the abandonment of the thinking in force until now so as to determine the proper matter for thinking’. Does thinking amount to dying? To causing to die? Through abusive use of this matter by some.” (Irigaray 1999:6).

What is the abuse? It be considered as a need to draw the disparate bits together in a neat story with clear antecedents as here, so a question; how is this paper about creating the story, concocting something? Concocting means composing, devising, inventing and from the Latin stem concoct to concoquere meaning digest or cook. Thus how do we cook the books when seeking a research question? Or rather is it the ‘cook’ book that instructs us on how to cook, how to follow a particular epistemology which legitimates certain kinds of evidence which answer certain kinds of questions, whereas continental philosophy demands the different kind of thought, thinking for ourselves, thinking in relation which involves a response to the other. Continental philosophy therefore opens up questions of psychotherapeutic research as needing to be about relational research not just in terms of its research questions but in its research methodologies as responsive to questions. Thus a different position can be taken up whereby meaning and learning are seen as an intertwining between the embodied and the world (Merleau-Ponty 1964). Merleau-Ponty explains this intertwining thus:

“...he who sees cannot possess the visible unless he is possessed by it, unless he is of it, unless, by principle, according to what is required by the articulation of the look with the things, he is one of the visibles, capable of a single reversal, of seeing them-he who is one of them”. Merleau-Ponty (1964:134-135)

2.4 Conclusions

Through previous research and some passing notes attention to disparate experiences shows how ideas can emerge in research but they also leave a break, gap, disjuncture between. These gaps are difficult to attend to because they turn us to the dread of unknowing and the need for enclosure and closure. The dread is the anxiety that echoes death, existing from birth to death, and which comes into play when the gap between is opened, when we meet the other.
Psychotherapeutic research must not forget that the speaking subject is speaking to the other and therefore subject to them, thus free associations, passing notes, reverie arise out of the intersubjective experience which we desire to name but which requires an awaiting, a deferral. Creative thought will not therefore arise out of knowing alone, we need patience for the unknown. But the unknown will not necessarily fit with a static research question or problem or indeed its solution, the usual suspects, the usual epistemology, but what of the one that got away? The law however already allows for the notes between the lines, in the margin, the context becomes text too!

In psychotherapeutic research the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty challenges us not to incorporate or reject but wait with the tension between. To have due regard for what occurs, what comes to us without dismissing it because it does not fit with our desire for a clear research question, or assimilating it to fit with and be hidden in existing knowledge. Either way the different thought dissolves away in its solution. Thus the proposition that the theoretical constructs of psychoanalysis are 'interpersonal rather than intrapsychic' phenomena (Oakley 1989:4) and the resulting hypotheses identified on page two can only be considered now because of the very questioning of: how research questions arise through a series of intersubjective experiences, how such relationships can open up thought, how the attempt to find a solution to a problem or an answer to a question closes thought down because of the continual comparison of phenomena to the question which results in rejection and assimilation based on whether the experiences tell the right story. The idea of intersubjective experience shifts between question and methodology.

Research questions are not, however, discarded. The earlier hypotheses have also not been abandoned but have mutated. The disparate experiences described led, over time, to an interest in the unknown in the acquisition of therapeutic knowledge. The questions subsequently generated were: Firstly, is it through the between that you can engage with the unknown? Secondly,
how can you get a response from the unknown? Here already are some of the researcher’s biases present in proposing where you can locate the unknown or in the desire for a response to fill the gap of unknowing. A more viable question, however, arises in relation to how psychotherapists learn about the unknown which could also be seen to address knowledge and the unknown, hence: “how do psychotherapists learn about the unknown?”

The next part of the process will be to consider how to respond to this question from a phenomenological perspective, without turning them into problems to be solved. Essentially this chapter has formed a condensation of a number of ideas related to the unknown which will form the basis of the following chapters: The unknown is focus of chapter three in relation to different ways in which others have approached questions of the unknown; learning about the unknown in chapter four reviews how the unknown is addressed in learning and in learning about psychotherapy and; researching learning about the unknown considers how the researcher intends to respond to, rather than answer the question, perhaps through passing notes, free association and reverie which becomes the focus of chapter five in relation to questions of epistemology, ontology and methodology. At the end of chapter five the method for data collection will also be reviewed in order to clarify the next stages of the research.
3. **ON UNKNOWN**

3.1 **Introduction**

In chapter two the main focus was on the background to the research and the emergence of the unknown as a field of exploration, with some links to theory and continental philosophy. The initial idea of the unknown mutated into the main research question and became: "*How do psychotherapists learn about the unknown?*" This chapter questions the unknown from theoretical and philosophical perspectives as proposed by Silverman (2000) commencing with an initial discussion of phenomenology which is the position taken up from the beginning. Learning and learning within psychotherapy are addressed more fully in chapter four and phenomenological research and the operationalising of key terms and research methods is undertaken in chapter five. In taking up the above question, from the problematic of how to respond to the question rather than assume the possible as awaiting to be found (for example as an answer or concept) this chapter continues to take up the phenomenological stance of exploring a question of unknown rather than conceptualising the unknown. The concern is therefore with unknown rather than 'the unknown'. Not even substituting 'the' definite with the indefinite 'a' but leaving it undefined.

Usually an analysis of the research question involves breaking it down into definitions of each key word, thus operationalising the major concepts (eg Moustakas 1994). One problem with this approach is the way the structure of the question influences the meaning of each term, for example each word in a sentence changes the sense of all the other words and their collective meaning cannot emerge until the last word, something Hawke (2000) draws attention to and which was a crucial idea in Lacan's thought (Sarup 1993). In fact by the last word of this chapter it emerges that there is no such thing as a last word, the unknown remains always open to possibility. The difficulty of the interrelationship between the various meanings within the overall question leads to a need to acknowledge another aspect governing this research whereby language is seen as a set of relationships and differences with a continuous process of slip and slide (Lacan 1977a, 1977b, Merleau-Ponty 1962). The
relationship of the unknown to ‘learning in psychotherapy’ will be considered in chapter four.

The main focus here will be on ‘unknown’ viewed from a phenomenological perspective rather than attempting a simple definition, hence an approach of broad brush strokes as a way of responding to the question rather than defining. The concern here is also with identifying how others have approached questions of unknown and the limits that such positions inevitably impose. In view of the limits of study at this level the approach will be more about how they have approached unknown rather than in depth analysis of the various theories, although it is acknowledged that context infers text too. After an outline of phenomenology, through the lens of intentionality within the thought of Husserl (1929) and Merleau-Ponty (1962, 1964b), a consideration of other perspectives will therefore be made including: Psychoanalysis, Existentialism and Continental thought (including Feminist ideas and Ethics) with phenomenology being utilised as counterpoint to each resulting in a deconstruction of these other perspectives through phenomenology and in turn a deconstruction of phenomenology through each of these various perspectives. It is thus intended to acknowledge where different theories are helpful, for example through their methods of approaching the unknown as well as where such approaches are limited by their partial nature, which is not to say that there is any one universal theory either. In taking phenomenology as a starting point the various alternative perspectives immediately become other and phenomenology falls prey to the power play as a dominant discourse. A more in depth discussion of the implications of phenomenology for methodology and as a research method will also be given in chapter 5.

3.2 Phenomenology

Phenomenology is the starting point for an exploration of the unknown because of the way Merleau-Ponty (1962) in particular emphasises the mystery of the world and our experience over theories which seek to explain the world and others. According to Spinelli (1989) intentionality is central to phenomenological thought and is concerned with our interpretive relationship with the world as began by Brentano and developed by Husserl. Intentionality has a number of interrelated elements. Firstly,
intentionality which is concerned with consciousness is directional in that thought is always concerned with something even if that object is imaginary (Moustakas 1994) thus; secondly it is also relational or as Husserl states: "Something that exists is in intentional communion with something else that exists" (Husserl 1960 in Friedman 1991:81). Finally intentionality is composed of both noematic and noetic aspects or the appearance of a phenomenon (as opposed to the thing itself) is equally important and hence the meaning we ascribe to the phenomenon (Spinelli 1989). These interrelated aspects of intentionality will now be discussed.

One of the problems with intentionality is that the natural attitude tends to get in the way of thought. The natural attitude is our tendency to seek to explain the world in interested ways, in the sense that interest is already invested with a title (see Hoad 1996) rather than disinterestedly which requires:

"... a splitting of the ego: in that the phenomenological ego establishes himself as 'disinterested onlooker,' above the naively interested Ego" (Husserl 1960 in Friedman 1991:78).

Disinterestedly is the phenomenological attitude which requires description of what is given in such a way as to avoid interpretation or reading into the experience aspects from the natural attitude. Or to put it another way the title or name needs to be deferred. Although the direction of intentionality can be seen as consciousness of something, there is possibility to defer deciding what that something is or on deciding still remain open to the possibility that it will change again. Can one remain uncertain? Thus for phenomenology, knowing becomes at best a temporary state of affairs and although we are 'condemned to meaning' (Merleau-Ponty 1962:xix) or compelled to name, even the phenomenological essence is not an end but rather a means (Merleau-Ponty 1962:xiv). Meaning is therefore not the same as knowing although it may often be confused as such.

The meaning of essence can be misleading when seen as a final truth rather than as a means and so mislead us to a form of reductionism rather than a phenomenological reduction based on meaning rather than knowing. Silverman (2000) sees reductionism, or the attempt to condense multi layered experience to a single phenomenon, from a cause and effect perspective, as a hazard in social science
research which is concerned with the complexity of human interaction. Again Merleau-Ponty highlights the difference and states:

"But it is clear that the essence is here not the end, but a means, that our effective involvement in the world is precisely what has to be understood and made amenable to our conceptualization, for it is what polarizes all our conceptual articularizations." (Merleau-Ponty 1962: xiv)

There is a paradox here that the phenomenological reduction and the nature of essence on the one hand require a rupture in our glued ness with the world and well worn paths, and one might wonder what that rupture might require. On the other hand here is the idea that all this will lead to understanding which surely the nature of phenomenology as concerned with uncertainty and ambiguity make questionable. Merleau-Ponty (1962) sees understanding differently to ‘classical science’ as a system of beliefs that ‘believes itself complete’ he calls for a:

“...return to the world of actual experience which is prior to the objective world, since it is in it that we shall be able to grasp the theoretical basis no less than the limits of that objective world, restore things to their concrete physiognomy, to organisms their individual way of dealing with the world, and to subjectivity its inherence in history.” (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 57)

Here he seems to be calling our attention back to experience and not just the experience of one subject or the other but later as intersubjectivity. Perhaps an example of what he uncovers here is how we can attempt a phenomenological method for our research project and participants but forget to do so for our own journey in the process. Or consider the influence of one on the other. Indeed he points out how we forget our own perceptual field and thus its influence on the phenomenological project. Further there is a tendency in thinking, whereby we seek to understand, in the sense of stabilising meaning in such a way that it actually becomes skewed in ways we lose sight of. This is what happens when meaning and knowing become confused with each other. Perhaps when we write in our journals or in the margin or between the lines, as opposed to a formal project such as this, we do not attempt to think in order to understand but rather write in a naïve or raw way that illustrates our lack of understanding (Cayne & Loewenthal 2004). This is closer to the phenomenological requirement to:
"...reawaken perception and foil its trick of allowing us to forget it as a fact and as perception in the interest of the object which it presents to us and of the rational tradition to which it gives rise." (Merleau-Ponty 1962:57)

Understanding is therefore as much concerned with attending to our not understanding (unknowing) as with understanding as knowing. The above also relates to the emphasis on description of experience as a way of reawakening our contact with the world, both the world and our perception of it. Such contact leads then to both some recognition of our position in the world, in relation to, and therefore how we attempt to reconstruct the world as well as something of the world.

Another problem is that we often attend or direct our thought to what is already known, or what can be explained or to the explanation itself rather than to attempting a naïve description of what is known as if we do not know it. This as if – ness is problematic because how can we pretend we do not know, well it does not have to be a pretence which would be a kind of bad faith, but rather an acknowledging that there will be things we actually do not know. The idea that intention is directed outwards does not have to ignore the difficulty that being directed from our own position what can actually happen is that we direct our attention back to that which we direct it from, a kind of self at the centre notion from which all else is mirrored.

It is this kind of solipsistic engagement that Husserl denies for phenomenology precisely because of its intersubjective nature (Kearney & Rainwater 1996) although it seems always to be a risk.

"That is to say, our intentional activity is far from eternally virginal consciousness, somehow untouched by memory of prior horizons that precede and inform all intentional activities of consciousness whatsoever. Human history thereby acquires a significance in the later Husserl that cannot be circumvented, not even by science" (Kearney and Rainwater 1996:5).

Merleau-Ponty (1962) takes up the link between intentionality and intersubjectivity in a critique of both 'extreme objectivism' and 'extreme subjectivism' including the Cartesian cogito and the idea that the subject can be independent of or separate from the world. He argues that meaning emerges between differing world views, perhaps in a sense they lean on each other and spark against each other. About such meaning he states:
"But it should not be set in a realm apart, transposed into absolute Spirit, or into a world in the
realist sense. The phenomenal world is not pure being, but the sense which is revealed where
paths of my various experiences intersect, and also where my own and other people's
intersect and engage with each other like gears. It is thus inseparable from subjectivity and
intersubjectivity, which find their unity when I either take up my past experiences in those of
the present or other people's in my own. For the first time the philosopher's thinking is
sufficiently conscious not to anticipate itself and endow its own results with reified form in
the world." (Merleau-Ponty 1962:xx)

The notion of the self as a starting point or as central may always be assumed,
therefore, as the place of knowing and raises a question of whether the unknown can
only ever be reached by jumping off from the stance of knowing or viewing the self as
a pivotal entity. If the known is always seen as preceding the unknown the return to
self as a centrifugal force seems to result. As will be later discussed post modern
writers question the stability of such a term as 'self' and highlight problems
associated with the self which is seen as an illusory concept along with the idea of
knowing a single unified self. For Merleau-Ponty the discovery of unknown
phenomena can be reached not from their relation to the known but in the space
between subjects. "Here there is nothing comparable to the solution of a problem,
where we discover an unknown quantity through its relation with known ones"
(Merleau-Ponty 1962:178). At least Merleau-Ponty (1962) seems to be proposing
that the unknown is not discovered, because it is not waiting to be found, it lies
elsewhere, lies hither to or rather does not await us at a particular location but
something happens through intersubjective experience.

In fact the unknown that can break through in such intersubjective processes is
concerned with meaning. For Husserl, however, the phenomenological reflection is
quite different to and yet runs alongside what he calls the "objective positing
produced in unreflective consciousness" (Husserl 1929 in Kearney and Rainwater
1996:17). He seems to be arguing that the positivist attitude is the natural attitude
which is precisely the concern of the phenomenological epoche and description and
through them the phenomenological reduction involves:

"....(1)the methodical and rigorously consistent epoche of every objective positing in the
psychic sphere, both of the individual phenomenon and of the whole psychic field in general;
and (2) in the methodically practiced seizing and describing of the multiple 'appearances' as
appearances of their objective units and these units as units of component meanings accruing
to them each time in their appearances" (Husserl 1929 in Kearney & Rainwater 1996:18).
The phenomenological attitude is one of reflection and is the opposite of the natural attitude which Husserl calls "unreflective consciousness" (Husserl 1929 in Kearney & Rainwater 1996:17). Merleau-Ponty also argues that:

"Reflection is truly reflection only if it is not carried outside itself, only if it knows itself as reflection-on-an-unreflective-experience and consequently as a change in structure of our existence" (Merleau-Ponty 1962:62).

However this neither involves knowledge as reduced into being nor being reduced into knowledge and this means that the subject can never know being nor can being ever fully inform knowing. The best that we can manage is to seek examples whilst recognising the dual problematic of the limitations of both the example which can never represent fully the experience and the ways our own perception may place self and the natural attitude at the centre in understanding the world and being (Merleau-Ponty 1962). One could say, therefore, that reflection on an experience needs always to recognise that something unknown remains beyond our grasp and reflection is only reflective when it realises this.

The phenomenological method also therefore requires explication of both the 'what' of experience and the 'how' it reveals itself to us, as interplay between. Here are the noematic (the what) and noetic (the how) tendencies of the phenomenological description whether pertaining to the individual or the individual in relation to. Thus meaning emerges through the interplay between the modes through which we become conscious of something as well as the nature of the something (Husserl 1929 in Kearney & Rainwater 1996). Phenomenology is therefore concerned not just in what sense or meaning people make of certain phenomena and how this comes about but also in which phenomena people choose to attach meaning.

The problem with choice is the tendency to be misled by the natural attitude or the desire to posit consequently assimilating or excluding ideas too quickly. Thus phenomena that we do not want to set aside still need to be questioned and things that we do set aside require revisiting. Bracketing then is no simplistic setting aside of anything but a continual interplay between rereading the obvious and revisiting the strange. A problem inherent in bracketing occurs when we position ourselves in either of the two opposing positions of incorporation and rejection. Hence the
immediate taking in of something without an appreciation of the difference is just as problematic as rejecting something that is too different for us to bear.

In essence phenomenology is concerned with bearing uncertainty, doubt and unknowing, balanced with a recognition of our need to find meaning which can lead to a tendency to fix or stabilise this meaning as knowledge and understanding. Whilst the natural attitude exerts an irresistible pull phenomenology requires the ability to reflect on both phenomena and the meaning we attach to them so that we can catch ourselves in the very act of confusing meaning with knowing. Suddenly we can then notice our thrownness in the world and begin to experience the world, and experience must be the starting point for learning about the world. For Merleau-Ponty experience which is “the opening onto our de facto world” (1962:221) lies on “the hither side of any formation of ideas” (1962:220). The idea of the hither side recurs again and again in his work and seems to be concerned with that which precedes as well as that which lies elsewhere than knowing, whether as grand theories or personal theories, and infers experience as being concerned with unknowing. Essentially there is a difference between Husserl’s intentionality of act which is concerned with evaluation and a deliberate taking up of a position compared to his operative intentionality as:

“that which produces the natural and antipredicative unity of the world and of our life being apparent in our desires, our evaluations and in the landscape we see, more clearly than in objective knowledge…” (Merleau-Ponty 1962:xviii).

Operative intentionality is therefore non assertive, non positing and indeed arises in the accidental, one could almost say unintentional.

Intentionality with its concern for consciousness as always conscious of something appears to convey with it a concern with the known seeming to limit consciousness to knowing although there is a question of whether all experience can be clearly apportioned as either conscious or unconscious. There are experiences, such as feelings, that we know we have but do not know what they are or experiences which we do not know are occurring whilst others notice. And yet these do not seem to fit with the unconscious, or perhaps the difference between the unconscious and the intentionality of consciousness is not so clearly differentiated. Whilst both phenomenology as a concern with intentionality and consciousness and
psychoanalysis as a concern with the unconscious have ways of acknowledging the unknown this discussion now moves to comparing and contrasting the juxta position between these positions in order to highlight the limitations of each in a study of the unknown. These ideas will now be compared and contrasted with other views about the unknown.

3.3 Psychoanalysis

Within psychoanalysis there are various ways of conceptualising the unknown, the main method being development of various schemata such as Freud’s topographical and the later structural models of the system unconscious (Freud 1915, 1923). Being concerned with ambiguity Lacan both attempts to break free of the rules of such doctrine whilst simultaneously interacting with them, arguing that any engagement with the unconscious involves a plurality of thought (Bowie 1991). On the other hand Lacan also provides his own system of classification in the orders of the symbolic, the real and the imaginary (Lacan 1977a). Likewise Bion both acknowledges the unknown as the no thing, as an inability of experiencing of the pre verbal, whilst then situating it within a taxonomy of experience known as “The Grid” (Bion 1962, 1970, 1997). Winnicott’s unknown seems to take a more phenomenological like approach in recognising a space as a moment of unknowing which opens up as the child makes a transition between one kind of relating and another (Winnicott 1971, 1986). He seems to be less concerned with seeking to explain the nature of the unknown space so much as to describe the phenomena that emerge during such experiences. The ways in which these theorists address the unknown, their modes of accessing it and various associated phenomena will be explored in counterpoint to phenomenology.

3.3.1 Freud:

Freud’s great unknown is arguably the unconscious which already had a long history before Freud drew attention to it, according to Whyte (1979). Like all great ideas, however, the importance of the unconscious came to notice through unpredictable circumstances when he was able to consider the motives of a young woman who ‘fell in love’ with Breuer during her therapy with him (Breuer & Freud 1895 in Gay 1995:76). Instead of simply accepting the experience or fleeing Freud was able to attend to the experience asking what was happening, thus he neither incorporated the
phenomenon (initially at least), for example by fusing it into some existing theory nor rejected it; unlike his friend Breuer (Gay 1995). One could say that Freud was able to face the unknown. This case was one of Freud and Breuer's cases of hysteria, Anna O. Later through the case of 'Dora' the term for this kind of experience became 'transference love,' defined as:

"They are new editions or facsimiles of the impulses and phantasies which are aroused and made conscious during the progress of the analysis; but they have this peculiarity, which is characteristic for their species, that they replace some earlier person by the person of the physician. To put it another way: a whole series of psychological experiences are revived not as belonging to the past, but as applying to the person of the physician at the present moment. (Gay 1995:234).

These phenomena became classified as transference and associated with Freud's ideas about the unconscious they became part of his conceptual framework. Freud remained ambiguous about transference, suggesting it was both the result of unknown forces from the past resurrected in the present and yet also evoked by the present situation with the therapist (Gay 1995). It is often through almost throwaway remarks that Freud illustrates such uncertainty, for example that transference love is both different and yet the same as ordinary love: "these departures from the norm that constitute precisely what is essential about being in love" and that something is, therefore, also happening in the present to create the phenomena, "He (the therapist) has evoked this love by instituting analytic treatment" (Gay 1995:385).

Initially, at least Freud seemed to be willing to think about phenomena that did not fit his existing knowledge. Transference seems to be an example of how Freud could both seem certain about phenomena once transformed into theoretical constructs whilst at the same time hinting at his own uncertainty. From a phenomenological perspective Freud seems to be caught by the natural attitude of naming and therefore fixing phenomena in time and then positing such phenomena theoretically, perhaps also being caught by his own agenda of needing to be accepted by the scientific community (eg Symington 1986). Boss, an existential phenomenological psychotherapist, critiques the turning of phenomena especially those associated with transference into a theory which dismisses the genuine feelings of the client for the therapist whilst at the same time acknowledging that such feelings may be immature and distorted by the "limitations of perception imposed on the patient by his earlier relationship" (1963:125).
Two other important aspects about the unknown arise from these cases of hysteria: firstly the fact that such phenomena were seen as being unconscious to the patient but accessible through the allowing of such experiences to unfold in the belief that they would lead to the patient’s difficulties and, secondly the importance of talking without censorship of one’s conscious experiences through free association, as a way of accessing one form of unknown experiences in this case emerging from the unconscious. Ultimately therefore the relationship between conscious and unconscious thought was crucial and Freud developed two major models to explain this relationship namely: the initial or topographical model of the conscious, the preconscious and the unconscious and later the structural model of the ego, id and superego (Gay 1995). The relationship between the models and the method needs further thought.

Freud (along with Husserl) attended lectures by Brentano, the harbinger of phenomenology who was opposed to the physicalist tradition in Europe, believing that there was more to man than was reducible to chemical-physical forces (Symington 1986). Symington also suggests that it is noteworthy that Freud never accords any influence to Phenomenology in his written works although he is less clear what the significance is except in an aside where he highlights Freud’s need to be accepted by the scientific community (Symington 1986). He goes on to point out Freud’s claim that psychological processes could not be shown to be the effect of ‘organic transactions’ due to limited knowledge and that he would thereafter (after what?) confine himself to psychological models. Symington, however suggests that the physicalist approach (for example in Freud’s topographical model of the systems conscious, preconscious and unconscious, Freud 1915) is still in evidence because: “all activity in the organism is released by blind forces” (Symington 1986:59). Symington points out that such a model cannot contemplate intentionality although this initial model was later modified, but not entirely replaced, by the structural model in the 1923 paper “The ego and the id” (Freud 1923 in Gay 1995) where he argues the notion of the intentional ego emerges (Symington 1986). Symington’s meaning of intentionality is unclear although it seems to have evolved out of a questioning of the physicalist idea that the organism can be reduced to only chemical-physical forces and therefore there are no other forces at play. Similarly the phenomenological
intentionality is concerned with the idea that thought cannot be reduced simply to such physical causes. In fact it is often unclear, especially early on in his writings, that Freud’s position was simply based in the physicalist tradition.

For example the early paper “Screen Memories” already indicates the importance of the way meanings are ascribed to experiences through later experiences:

“It may indeed be questioned whether we have any memories at all from our childhood; memories relating to our childhood may be all that we possess. Our childhood memories show us our earliest years not as they were but as they appeared at the later periods when the memories were aroused. In these periods of arousal, the childhood memories did not, as people are accustomed to say, emerge; they were formed at that time. And a number of motives, with no concern for historical accuracy, had a part in forming them, as well as in the selection of the memories themselves” (Freud 1899 in Gay 1995:126).

This paper is crucial in recognising unknown forces at work but with recognition that there is some kind of interplay between past and subsequent experiences rather than past experiences simply causing a reaction in the present; in other words some kind of intentional act is also at play. Perhaps what makes it difficult to recognise intentionality within early psychoanalysis is the way theoretical constructs became replayed in psychotherapy or rather placed before experiencing.

Boss, for example, stresses the unconscious not as a psychic structure or location but as inter relational experiencing both in terms of the relationship between experiences past and present and the relationship between one subject and the other (Boss 1963). Contemporary psychoanalysis also seems to be developing along these lines. Oakley (1994) goes so far as to propose that the unconscious is not an intrapsychic structure but a group of interpersonal phenomena whilst Ogden (1999:25) writes of what he calls the “unconscious intersubjective construction generated by the analytic pair.” He seems to question the psychoanalytic conception of transference and countertransference whilst re conceptualising their role in bringing to consciousness, unconscious experiences, for both therapist and client. Whilst he does seem to locate this construction as a “third I” or “transference-countertransference” experience, he is also attempting to present it as experiential and like Boss sees the unfolding of our being in the world (which he terms aliveness) as the primary intent of psychoanalysis.

The interplay between past and subsequent experience illustrates the difference between understanding as associated with theory and meaning as associated with
intentionality and through it experience. Laplanche (1999) in particular picks up this issue of the way a subsequent experience influences perception of an earlier experience in writings about afterwardsness (nachtrachlichkeit). This was an idea originating from Freud (eg 1899 in Gay 1995) although Laplanche also argues that Freud did not follow it through (Laplanche 1999). One way of understanding afterwardsness is connected with time as an interplay between past and present in either direction; from past to present being determinist or present to past being hermeneutic (Laplanche 1999). The former being seen as Freud’s main concern and the latter belonging to Jung (Laplanche 1999). What Laplanche (1999) suggests was forgotten was another dimension; that is the impact of the other through unspoken communication which he terms the enigmatic signifier and which leaves the subject engaged in another layer of translation in both temporal directions. There is a distinction here between external reality of the other and subjective experiencing compared to the enigmatic signifier laid down unknown to either but which requires an act of translation or interpretation. The effect of this third dimension of experiencing presents a hidden, mysterious force remaining “otherwise” but setting up fear, dread of the other (Laplanche 1999). It seems that Laplanche is saying that the source of the impact of the unknown signifier does not lie situated in the unconscious but invokes something (a temporal rather than literal place) situated between one and the other, nor as symbolic, as something other; a message to be continually translated-detranslated-retranslated. These varied acts of translation appear to invoke the intentional but also something beyond.

If intentionality is present in Freud’s early work the way it is addressed specifically in the later paper the ego and the id (Freud 1923) through what Symington (1986) calls the intentional ego needs clarification. What this appears to mean is that the ego is seen as the agent of perception both engaging in the interplay between inner and outer experience and developing out of it, so something other than biological forces is responsible for “reality testing.” The ego is also seen as both concerned with what is conscious as well as with unconscious material in that it represents reason especially as ‘holding in check’ the forces emanating from the id (Freud 1923). The ego however engages in an intentional (as directional, relational and concerned with what appears) act by the following strategy outlined by Freud:
"Often a rider, if he is not to be parted from his horse, is obliged to guide it where it wants to
go; so in some way the ego is in the habit of transforming the id’s will into action as if it were
its own" (Freud 1923 in Gay 1995:636).

Whilst attempting to explain something of the relationship between ego and id this
explanation also points the therapist to the method by which something unconscious,
which could be viewed as a form of unknown, can become conscious. In other words
the therapist has to be not only prepared to go where the other wants to go but to
guide the other so this can happen, hence the therapist has also to be open to the
uncertainty of not knowing where the other is going.

For Freud (1923) the way something then shifts from unconscious to conscious is
through connection with a word presentation corresponding to it via the preconscious,
thus unconscious material remains unknown whilst pre conscious material can be
linked to language. Such linking appears to be the domain of the preconscious. Freud
however acknowledges that “we can come to know even the unconscious only by
making it conscious” (Freud 1923) and the sense of this seems to be more about
unconscious phenomena rather than The Unconscious. Thus Freud himself seems
ambiguous by both presenting theoretical models of The Unconscious as if the
unknown can be a known place and presented as a theory whilst acknowledging that it
can only be known through phenomena once they emerge to consciousness. It is just
this point that is perhaps missed by Green who argues that psychoanalysis and
phenomenology have quite different intentions as psychoanalysis is concerned with
the unconscious and phenomenology with description of conscious experience (Green
2000). It seems, however, that it is by guiding the client to follow their conscious
experience that unconscious phenomena can break through. Whilst phenomenology
also has a concern with the unknown a difference occurs in the way psychoanalysis
treats phenomena so that they become fixed in a moment in time leading to claims of
a generalisable theory. Indeed Stanton (1997) points out the “partial character” and
transitory nature of such phenomena, and hence the problem of universalising theories
within the psychoanalytic approach. Phenomenology does attempt to name and even
to make some general conclusions but remains open to the experience as both the
starting point and the agent of change.

Freud (1923) acknowledges then that the unconscious can only be known by
phenomena emerging to the conscious via the preconscious and his method for
attending to this process is free association (Freud 1913). This process was for Freud the technique of encouraging the patient to say whatever came to mind (Freud 1913). The idea being that the patient was freed of the defences, and associated anxiety, that inhibited unconscious elements becoming conscious, although resistance was never far away. He also advises the therapist to avoid making judgements about what is being said or selecting some issues whilst disregarding others and to remember meaning often arrives later, here is another link with afterwardsness (Freud 1913). In fact he uses the phrase "evenly suspended attention" to indicate the way attention is given in such a way that the conscious of the therapist be restrained in favour of "unconscious memory" (Freud 1913). These ideas seem very close to the phenomenological attitude of epoche, description and horizontalisation (eg Spinelli 1989) as well as the relational aspects of intentionality. Free association could also be seen to help us speak the unspeakable because it more clearly engages with the idea that words speak us or as Merleau-Ponty puts it language possesses us and not the other way round (Merleau-Ponty 1962), thus language is not in us but we are in language. Or rather language solicits a set of interpersonal phenomena. Indeed Ogden (1997) points to free association being an interpersonal phenomenon where analyst, as well as patient, attends to their associations. He further cites Freud stating that each needs to: "'turn his own unconscious like a receptive organ towards the transmitting unconscious' (Freud 1912) of the other" (Ogden 1997: 133).

The ideas of Freud (eg 1915, 1923) are important in this study because of the way the unconscious acts as metaphor for the unknown which is also problematic for a number of reasons: firstly because of the way the unconscious is shown to be a partial way of viewing an aspect of the unknown; secondly because Freud recognised that it is not possible to know an unknown because once known it is no longer unknown and; thirdly because of the method by which Freud saw one kind of unknown (unconscious elements) emerging, albeit as known, through a method that acknowledges the unknown cannot be sought directly. Post Freudian and contemporary psychoanalysts view the unconscious as a group of interpersonal phenomena rather than an intra psychic structure (Oakley 1994, Ogden 1997) and their work could be seen as a critique of Freud as well as a development of his ideas. In summary their ideas indicate that talking alone is not enough, the way to the unknown is through the experience of talking to the other, language becomes a mode
of simultaneously experiencing and speaking of the unspeakable but it involves relationship. Whilst for Freud it seems that what emerges is the repressed, for Laplanche (1999) this means new constructions around an admixture of the past, present and other. Such constructions are continually changing and being added to as the result of subsequent experiences and the instability of language and meaning. The slip and slide of language is particularly the domain of Lacan (Bowie 1991).

3.3.2 Lacan:

Words are at their most fascinating when we consider, not the known or intended meaning but all those other associated meanings lost in time but still resonant. For example it seems obvious to say that the unknown is not known to us and remains mysterious, which in the old English means baffling but which also conveys other meanings such as insoluble, bound, tightened and enigmatic. Such attention to language and the way it both hides and reveals meaning was the concern of Lacan particularly through his ideas about the relationship between the unconscious and language and his three orders of the symbolic, the imaginary and the real (Lacan 1977a, 1977b). His ideas appear to simultaneously illustrate the ‘structure’ of his thought whilst revealing a mode of attending to language, not as a way of accessing the unconscious so much as waiting for something unconscious to break through, without suggesting that it was already there, waiting to be discovered. Lacan’s famous phrase “the unconscious is structured like a language” (1977b) is itself ambiguous in the way it seems to convey an idea that the unconscious can be located and described in terms of language whilst hinting at something else. Bowie illustrates something of this ambiguity stating:

“The unconscious is not an occult quality or a black box but the conjectural sub-text that is required in order to make the text of dreams and conversations intelligible. The unconscious is no longer, in this view, ‘structured like a language’, for it has no existence outside language and no structure other than the one language affords.” (Bowie 1991: 71).

The above statement does open up, however, the importance of the relationship between the unknown as unconscious and language. For Lacan the subject is constituted by language and cannot therefore be separated from society or located as a central self or ego because of the inherent slippage of language and therefore meaning (Sarup 1993). Like Merleau-Ponty (1962), Lacan sees us as subject to language rather than possessors of it. Consequently neither language nor notions of self can be
viewed as immutable and the unknown cannot therefore be located, for example as an unconscious. The way that the unknown breaks through is related to Lacan's ideas about the signifier having precedence over the signified (Lacan 1977b). This means that he moves away from Saussure's view of language as a stable representation of human experience where a sign is composed of a stable relationship between signified and signifier (Kearney & Rainwater 1996). The signifying chain involves a continual interplay and slip between one signifier and the next, so that meaning is never final, further each signifier is a metaphor for the other (Lacan 1977b). The unconscious emerges as much through the slip as through language itself. In this sense the unknown comes into play through difference, the difference between; it is invoked through the other via language. The unconscious could then be argued to be an interpersonal phenomenon or group of phenomena.

For Lacan it is the symbolic which is concerned with language and difference, and which comes about as we recognize the world and others as unbound from us (Benvenuto & Kennedy 1989). As such we emerge from some of our confusion and fusion, which seems to involve a dissolving and loosening. In a sense the entry into language provides an opportunity to be wrenched from the 'self' deception most notably brought to the fore during the mirror stage (Lacan 1977b). Whilst at the mirror stage there is the recognition of a relationship with the inner and outer world and the child comes to recognise his or her own image in the world, the cost is that we also become ensnared by the moment of completion. As Bowie (1991) explains the moment of recognition of one's mirror image leads to the creation of an ego but it also lures one into the trap of continually reflecting back an illusory idea of being complete. The idea of seeing oneself in the mirror is also a device for illustrating how we become enchanted by our own image. This moment and the idea that there is some kind of central self or that the ego has become an autonomous whole is illusionary for Lacan (1977b) and results, he argues, in an array of ways of sustaining the imaginary, mainly associated with the ego. Hence we strive to find ways of continually replaying the moment of reflection or in other words of recapturing some reassurance that we exist. Thus it would seem that the unknown breaks through when reassurance whether as a response to needs or wants is not provided and where the other is then thrown back to their desire, confused as it may be with such needs and wants but at least with a chance of expression.
One could argue that Lacan’s version of the unknown is connected with desire as that which fuels the signifying chain and which although concerned with Eros cannot be mapped in terms of biological sexuality (Bowie 1991). So whilst desire “is ordinary enough to be found on every street corner” it remains at best inferential, it cannot be defined (Bowie 1991:133). Where it emerges is in the confusion between need and the demand for love, the meeting of the latter never being able to assuage the former.

"Desire is produced in the beyond of the demand, in that, in articulating the life of the subject according to its conditions, demand cuts off the need from that life. But desire is also hollowed within demand, in that, as an unconditional demand of presence and absence, demand evokes the want-to-be under the three figures of the nothing that constitutes the basis of the demand for love, of the hate that even denies the other’s being, and of the unspeakable element in that which is ignored [unknown] in its request. In this embodied aporia, of which one might say that it borrows, as it where, its heavy soul from the hardy shoots of the wounded drive, and its subtle body from the death actualized in the signifying sequence, desire is affirmed as the absolute condition" (Lacan 1977b:265).

As with the mirror stage the entry into language is, however, fraught with problems in that it both makes something possible whilst destroying something. Lacan’s view of the acquisition of language can be paralleled with Freud’s explanation of the child’s game with the reel, calling ‘fort’ (gone) when throwing it away and ‘da’ (there) when it is returned (Freud 1923 in Gay 1995). This game brings a measure of mastery over the experience of loss at a time when the child is recognising itself as separate from its mother, likewise language brings mastery at another time of separation, but with an additional twist. The arrival of language wrenches the child from that other (through the name of the father) whilst acting as a constant reminder of the very thing that has been lost (Easthope 1999). Lacan also plays on the child’s pleasure in destroying the presence of the other by pointing out that language acts in the same way so naming something kills it because it can then always be defined as something other than itself (Easthope 1999). Here is also a beginning to understanding language, not just as a substitution of or compensation for loss, but as a way of avoiding it, the absence is just too awful. The desire to name the hidden or absent, seen simultaneously as an avoidance, could also be viewed as problematic of knowing where knowledge results from a drive to name but always destroys too and concurrently is a way of eschewing the unknown and what it represents. It could be that it is the describing of something to another that invokes the desire to understand and be understood whilst at the same time this desire both subverts and contributes to what is said and how it is said.
That which is absent falls outside language and could be linked with Lacan’s third order, the real (1977a). The real as another way of explaining the unknown can be seen to be never far away in fact it is so close that we cannot ‘see’ it because of its simultaneous absence and proximity. Lacan’s real, which it is impossible to define, but is not the same meaning as reality, is concerned more with the undifferentiated which it is therefore impossible to name because only the differentiated enters the symbolic order (Benvenuto & Kennedy 1989). It could be argued that the symbolic register or language is a substitution for the unknown without being the unknown so language can only ever represent an approximation of forms of being thus we are always divorced from being. Language is what tightens around us whilst the real is both the potential force behind the loosening and our terror of non being. The real which continually threatens to destabilize the symbolic and break through cannot be defined but offers a timely reminder of the absent, the lost, the unknown, without ever becoming directly manifest. It always remains enigmatic.

The enigmatic is another position from which to view the unknown as mysterious, specifically the ‘enigmatic signifier’ as the conscious term, or rationale which is substituted, through the symbolic, for something unbearable (Lacan 1977b). Alternatively Laplanche’s version leads him to suggest moving away from the enigma of, towards the enigma in (for example femininity) and its function, which is concerned with what the other wants and what they want of me (thus a replay of Freud’s famous question: what does a woman want?) (Laplanche 1999). Here this would involve asking what is the function of the enigma in the mysterious hence, what does the other as mysterious want and want of me? The other is seen to embody in some way the mysterious, the unknown, the absent or the lost as something to be denied. If as Laplanche suggests the function of the enigma is concerned with otherness, the other also represents something unbearable, so does otherness not also personify, along with the real, dread?

The ‘break through’ or the modes of appearance of the unknown in phenomenology are concerned with ‘how’ or noetic as well as the ‘what’ or noematic aspect of intentionality (Husserl 1929 in Kearney & Rainwater). Whilst the noetic is not the same concept as Lacan’s meaning of the signifier (Lacan 1977b) they could be seen to
pertain to each other in that the noetic domain or modes of appearing occur through language without being the structural aspects of language. Hence like the signifier over the signified the noetic should perhaps have precedence over the noematic. In similar vein yet different register Merleau-Ponty emphasises the distinction between ‘la langue’ and ‘la parole’ giving primacy to ‘la parole’ in the sense that the structural aspects of language (la langue) rest on and are generated by the act of speech or the usage of language (la parole) rather than the other way around (Merleau-Ponty 1973). In other words the experience of language constructs language rather than some pre existing set of a priori rules which questions whether in fact we bestow the name from an existing position of knowing as opposed to some creative intersubjective experience where the name suggests itself to us.

The above ideas begin to call into question the Husserlian concept of intentionality where attention is directed towards the other and whether one is considering the relation between the signifier and signified, ‘la parole’ and ‘la langue’ or the noetic and the noematic, the other calls to us in some enigmatic way. If the rules of linguistics are not guiding the use of language and it is viewed as having a transitory or provisional nature and the ‘modes of’ are given primacy over the ‘what of experiencing a phenomenon, then how do we come to name the unnameable, speak the unspeakable or know the unknowable. Particularly when Merleau-Ponty is suggesting, like Lacan that it is language that controls us rather than the other way around (Merleau-Ponty 1962, Lacan 1977b). Initially it seemed that the way to consider this question was to outline how we came to language in the first place. Merleau-Ponty (1973) argues, however, that the acquisition of language cannot be reduced to stages and in fact during moments of unknowing both adults and children engage in the struggle to name in the same way. He states:

“In effect, a new notion cannot be explained clearly at once. The terms cannot be defined in advance since they will be fully defined only by the use that one makes of them. Consequently, since the ideal or logical order can only be overturned, as it occurs in the child, the adult makes use of the ‘direct method,’ which consists of specifically supposing as known that which is unknown.” (Merleau-Ponty 1973:60).

Moments of unknowing create a gap or break into which arrives the subject, enticed by the other, assuming they know what they do not, but meanwhile learning through intersubjective experience helps them to understand, although such understanding will never in a sense be complete. Language and consciousness are caught up in the same
circularity alongside each other, they relate to each other through relationship with others but each relationship both brings life and meaning whilst simultaneously destroying the other. If one considers as Merleau-Ponty (1962) does that knowledge and language are interrelational, and that the subject is subject to language rather than master of it then this could also be applied to knowledge. In a sense we are also caught up in a knot of our own construction: are we the constructors of knowledge or the constructed and to what extent are we actually supposing as known that which is really unknown? Furthermore why do we engage in that assumption?

Davey (1997) questions the Hegelian dialectic where difference is always about one or the other: male, female; mind, body; objective, subjective. The list is endless because we continually position ourselves in one place or the other. Such positioning could be viewed as another way of assuming the known. Laplanche’s (1999) critique of this positing suggests that anything in between is unbearable because of the tension created, caught between the two polarities, with opposing views. Again the absence (for example as the unknown) is too much. So as in dialectic of birth and death the life between, or perhaps more accurately the stuff of life that pervades everything, like air, gets forgotten. For Laplanche the work of mourning is about the gap left by the deceased where staying with the ambivalence is too painful (1999). Perhaps he is saying that we prefer to close the gap, block the space and yet the one always has an echo of the other, so for example birth carries a sense of sadness for us, it sends out an echo of death which is also with us all the time. In phenomenology the life between is concerned with experience as the only way to knowledge and learning, thus experience and meaning need to be given primacy over grand theories which can become deadening especially in relational disciplines such as psychotherapy. Something more of the difficulty of the gap, disjuncture, wrench, is examined in the work of Bion (1962, 1967, 1970) and Winnicott (1965, 1971, 1986).

3.3.3 Bion:

Usually in speaking and writing about knowledge, there is a concern with what is known. However there is a notion, in the realms of psychotherapy, that we are often touched by the unknown although Freud (1923) and Bion (1970) approach this question in similar and yet different ways. Freud (1923) sets out the unknown in
terms of a schema for the unknown as knowable through the possibility of a return to consciousness of some repressed elements. Likewise Bion (1970) suggests that we be open to unknowing as a way of being open to a ‘no’ thing but by addressing much more the experience that the therapist must endure in the process. Whereas Freud’s method for attending to the unknown as potentially knowable was free association (1913) Bion uses the term reverie (1970). Free association was more a technique with acknowledgement that an attitude that managed to avoid: attending to any one aspect, following the therapist’s hypotheses or worrying about remembering factual elements would lead to the unknown rather than the already known (Freud 1913). Whilst Ogden (1997) has linked the two terms in their original forms he also points out that Freud’s version was less concerned with the relatedness of therapist and patient because of the emphasis on a one way interaction which is that of the therapist sensing the unconscious experience of the patient.

Bion attends much more to the state of mind of the therapist which is able to wait without reaching for the solution or understanding and requires us to ‘eschew memory and desire’ (Bion 1970:31). He draws from the writings of John Keats on ‘negative capability’ to illustrate how instead of staying with uncertainty and unknowing we keep reaching for something, or for the next meaning. He points out that the therapist needs:

...to be aware of the aspects of the material that, however familiar they may seem to be, relate to what is unknown to him and to the analysand. Any attempt to cling to what he knows must be resisted for the sake of achieving a state of mind......patience....... I mean the term to retain its association with suffering and tolerance of frustration. (Bion 1970:124)

As well as the meaning of endure or tolerate, suffering carries with it the meaning of permit as in allowing something to come towards us, in particular the pain that we would rather avoid either patient or therapist. Bion was also clear about how unbearable it can be to stop clinging to the known and allow ourselves to experience the state of uncertainty and frustration which he likens to Klein’s pathological states of the paranoid schizoid and depressive positions, where the therapist will also experience the associated feelings of persecution and depression (Bion 1970). In making this link he could also be seen to be reducing the unknown to the known being caught by the return he is questioning. Gordon (2000) further discriminates between patience and awaiting the possible as waiting for something to arrive compared to
Bion's call for patience that can just wait 'without irritable reaching after fact and reason' (Keats cited by Bion 1970:124).

Reverie is concerned with the kind of thinking that Bion called Alpha function which 'converts primary sensory material into meaningful thought contents' and this primary sensory material he terms beta elements (Bion 1967). Beta elements are seen as 'things in themselves' which Bion sees as different from phenomena and as unknowable (Bion 1962:100). Failure of the conversion process occurs when the associated pain cannot be suffered and leaves the sensory material, beta elements, to be processed by projective identification through the other (Bion 1967, 1970). The explanation for the refusal to bear the pain is linked to the idea of the 'no thing' as a state between the loss of something and the appearance of something else with the inability to suffer whilst waiting seen as blocking new realizations. Ogden (1997) summarises this as a feeling of being adrift. Continual blocking of experience means that it remains in a pre verbal state, as beta elements, analogous to never having been experienced, for example particular feelings (Bion 1970). What Ogden elaborates on is the need for the therapist to permit their own experiencing of this process in such a way that they are able to experience the no thing and begin to speak of it with the patient (Ogden 1997). He highlights a number of difficulties with this: firstly the therapist's reveries are often strange and rarely, therefore, shared with each other, secondly such reveries need to be viewed as joint constructions between therapist and patient and thirdly the need to accrue such reveries over time before verbal symbolisation can occur (Ogden 1997). Thus the therapist needs the capacity to bear their own thoughts and the confusion and fusion of intersubjective experience, and to be able to wait whilst tolerating frustration of unknowing. Thus reverie could be seen as another admixture of unknown, unthought, self and other. What seems crucial in terms of the unknown aspects is the time/space between unknowing and knowing.

Bion (1962) suggests that the employment of thought actually relieves the tensions created by intolerance of frustration, an idea which he sees as being embedded in Freud's paper 'Two principles of Mental Functioning.' He states:

"Implicit in Freud's statement is the part played by intolerance of frustration in producing tension, and then its relief, by the employment of thought to fill the interval between the need to unburden the psyche of accretions of stimuli and the actual unburdening" (Bion 1962:28).
This statement points out the way thought can be used to avoid frustration, for example arising from unknowing, where thought is an exercise of itself, for itself and paradoxically thought then becomes a way of avoiding experiencing. In a sense this is saying that certain kinds of thought can actually be a way of not thinking. In Freud's terms the avoidance is related to intolerance of reality or unpleasure and the way 'momentary and imaginary' experience is more immediately satisfying than 'real satisfaction which calls for effort and postponement' (Freud 1911 in Gay 1995:304). The unknown aspect here is the interval between the tension and accompanying need to unburden and the actual unburdening, a kind of unknown as temporal, spatial rift.

Bion's (1962) response is to conceptualise the rift as something he calls the contact barrier which he says was presented by Freud as synonymous with the synapse or space between neurones in the nervous system. Such a space has a critical range in terms of space and time in the threshold level of build up and then transmission of electrical stimulus from one cell to the other. Bion seems, however, to shift from this biological way of understanding, more clearly drawing on the physiology as an analogy to illustrate the contact barrier as both a point of 'contact and separation' between conscious and unconscious experiences. He further explains the barrier as being permeable or open to thought when functioning at alpha level whilst beta functioning not only destroys linking and therefore thought but also evokes a need in the other (the therapist) to respond to the client's demands (Bion 1962). The immediate response to such demands is another way of reducing frustration or closing the rift and consequently avoiding thought.

The above ideas are concerned, like phenomenology with the unknown, with particular focus on the unknown as ultimately knowable even though one needs to be able to tolerate unknowing. The unknown or 'no' thing as related to pre verbal experiencing infers that the main purpose of psychoanalysis is to allow beta elements which cannot be truly experienced to convert to alpha elements through the therapist's tolerance and eventual interpretation of experience, which means that experiences such as feelings can be experienced through thought. What Bion also highlights is that like the therapist the scientist can be caught up in a process of incorporation and rejection or to use Bion's (1962) terms inability to reject or ignore co existing with continual evacuation. Either way experience cannot be tolerated or to stay with the
biological analogy, digested. These ideas which have similarity with the phenomenological as opposed to the natural or scientific attitude and method propose that so called scientific method can itself be close to the disturbances in thought described above.

However the complex relationship between language, meaning and knowing arises in Bion's work where he discriminates between model, experience and theory (1962). It is unclear because of the nature of published work which sets out ideas well into their development, but generally experience seems to be continually compared against abstract models, with decisions being made about whether the models need to be adapted, rejected or used to develop a more general theory. In phenomenology there is an attempt to set aside abstractions which would be seen as pre judgements, in order to engage with experience through description subsequently reducing the tendency to incorporate or reject based on what is already known. Bion himself recognises the problem of language whereby experiences are not reducible to cause and effect phenomena. In other words experiences are not connected in ways that follow the logic of language as stable so whilst one might use mechanistic ways of researching experience this will always fail due to the fact that human beings are not machines and their experiences 'are certain to be suffused with life' (Bion 1962:26). Despite these ideas he is then caught up in the processes he is trying to illuminate, for example by presenting experience in mathematical equations or the taxonomy of experience known as the grid. The gap between known and unknown seems to be a means to an end as well as the place where creativity arises. There is a dichotomy at work in Bion's thought in that on the one hand it seems always linked to the existing theory of the conscious, unconscious and return of the repressed, as the point of referral. In a sense the space is replaced with theory. His ideas about reverie open up, however, a possibility of new ways of thinking and so could also be seen as a critique of the limits of the unconscious as emphasising mainly what can be known about the unknown.

3.3.4 Winnicott:

The main feature of Winnicott's work which addresses something of the unknown is his work on the transitional space (1965, 1971, 1986). His ideas are useful in this
study because of the way the transitional space illustrates phenomena associated with unknowing which if tolerated lead to creativity. He recognises a transitional space as a phase of unknowing which opens up as the child makes a shift between one kind of relating and another (Winnicott 1986). For Winnicott these two kinds of relating involve the 'concept of the subjective object turning into one which is objectively perceived' (1986:133). In other words there is a shift from what is subjectively perceived or created by the child towards the ability to take 'externally perceived objects in and [set] them up as internal images' (Winnicott 1986:133). In the phase between the earlier concrete attachment relating and the symbolic attachment relating the child needs something to literally hold, that is the transitional object. What is interesting here is that Winnicott also seems to suggest that the transitional space exists in any situation where something unknown is going to happen, such as the curtain going up at the beginning of a play (1986).

Whenever we are faced with the unknown we engage in what Winnicott (1971) calls cheating which seems akin to the idea that we pretend to know what we do not yet know and further this is not unique to a phase of childhood. This is very similar to Merleau-Ponty's (1973) ideas about language development and the importance of experience in terms of language usage or perhaps one could say playing with words is possible even before we come to understand them. Winnicott in fact sees the babbling or playing with words that occurs in childhood as one of a group of phenomena arising from the transitional space (1971). A more concrete example of the phenomena occurring at this time, the 'transitional object' symbolises an 'intermediate area of experiencing'. This phenomenon is concerned with various experiences of something between, for example: inner and outer reality, separateness and interrelatedness, and the concrete and symbolic. There is a kind of spatial occurrence, it being impossible to define a space as a something, but what is possible is to describe phenomena arising from it. There are two important aspects of these phenomena which Winnicott identifies: firstly the transitional space is a place from which creativity emerges (1971) and secondly it is connected with loss (1986) so whilst there is a potential for something alive there is also a potential for anxiety and closure, death.
For Winnicott awareness of such a space between or transitional space creates a shock, because of the reminder of loss resonating with earlier separations (Winnicott 1986). Whilst the possibility of creativeness is present there is also a possibility for something deadening to occur at either end of the continuum of creativeness which is seen as a 'space/time integration' (Winnicott 1971:67). At one end of the spectrum is a tendency to remain out of touch with 'the facts of life' seen as a problem in reality experiencing whilst at the other end is an estrangement from dreaming (Winnicott 1971). Again these ideas are related for Winnicott to the reality principle, as already discussed (Freud 1911).

Another aspect of creative experiencing includes apperception compared to perception (Winnicott 1971). Apperception as a building up of associations and the linking of new ideas to existing ideas is compared to perception where difficulties occur because the baby is forced to see the other before they are ready, rather than have their own experiencing acknowledged. Such lack of acknowledgement leads to a shrivelling of creative capacity and a loss of a two way process of self-enrichment and exploration of the outside world (1971) effecting two main areas of response to experiences perceived as invasive. These are over compliance on the one hand and or reacting against on the other (Winnicott 1986). Interestingly Winnicott (1971) sees apperception as a major component of creativity and as being consistent with returning to phenomena afresh, as experienced each time rather than starting from what is already written and yet neither being compliant with nor reactive against. Here perception seems much more concerned with the external world mixing with internal experiencing, problematic when the outer or objective is insisted too soon.

One could also view these ideas as a critique of theory, such as the unconscious, being placed before a full exploration of an experience between two people. The Hegelian (Hegel 1985) dialectic appears inescapable whilst simultaneously under question. While experience is given primacy over existing theories it is eventually drawn into debate with them and experience may just then become the new thesis. A major difference from the Hegelian method lies in the ability to tolerate paradox which for Winnicott is concerned with the ability to create for oneself what was already there without initially realising or having it pointed out that it was already there. The crucial response to paradox is to realise it is not there to be resolved, it has to be
tolerated (Winnicott 1971, 1986). The potential space as a paradoxical unknown exists but cannot exist, as space between one and the other it invokes simultaneous joining and separation which leads to all kinds of phenomena associated with creativity. This creativity is somehow not the same as synthesis which is a resolution arising out of continual fission followed by fusion, preceded by argument and counter argument, linking cause and effect. Creativity is also concerned with production and aliveness and cannot shake off its connections with fertilization as with the first conception and sexuality leading to something new where life arises out of a fusion but also from an ongoing process of differentiation.

Merleau-Ponty’s view of perception is even more fluid than Winnicott’s in that he views perception ‘as a re-creation or reconstitution of the world at every moment’ (1962:207). One cannot therefore view perception as a causal stimulus because it is the experience already and it is the creative act in itself. In turn notions of internal or external, separate or fused, objective or subjective and concrete or symbolic as necessary for creative thought are questioned and further the gap for Merleau-Ponty is not to be located between these modes of experiencing but is already there as ourselves.

“All knowledge takes place within the horizons opened up by perception. There can be no question of describing perception itself as one of the facts of the world, since we can never fill up, in the picture of the world, that gap which we ourselves are, and by which it comes into existence for someone, since perception is the ‘flaw’ in this ‘great diamond’.” (Merleau-Ponty 1962:207).

A question arising through creativity concerns learning which can either invoke continual replay of the gap as transitional experiencing or evoke the gap that is non self. For Merleau-Ponty apperception is always concerned with positing and when positing is present there is only concern with ‘filling the hollow void of the future’ (1962:240). A non positing perception is ‘pre objective and pre-conscious experience’ (Merleau-Ponty 1962:242) so something always lies hither to our grasp and reflection (learning) can never be significant unless we recognise this gap and further unless we cease to fill it rather than face it, except it is beyond that kind of sensory perception.
3.4 Continental Philosophy

Continental philosophy has wide ranging interests, from existentialism (Kierkegaard 1941, 1944, Heidegger 1962) with its concern for ontology to post modern, post structuralist, thought which questions the subject as conscious construction with a view that is decentering, destabilising and fragmentary (Sarup 1993). According to Lowenthal and Snell (2003) this deconstruction of the subject ultimately leads to differing ways of viewing how we are subject to: for Derrida we are subject to difference, for Lacan language, for Levinas ethics, for Kristeva the semiotic and for Irigaray the monosexuality of western culture. The difficulty of confining such thinkers to particular categories is pointed out by Kearney and Rainwater (1996) along with the way they overlap and in addition it is often unclear how the various writers influence and are influenced by each other. For example the work of Kierkegaard may also be seen as a precursor to post modern thought (Loewenthal & Snell 2003), Derrida’s ideas although being nominated to post modern thought could be seen to emerge on the margins of phenomenology (Kearney & Rainwater 1996) and similarly the work of Merleau-Ponty is seen as phenomenological whilst his ideas also form a precursor to Postmodernism (Kvale 1992). As such his thought could be seen to be both phenomenological and post phenomenological. Additionally the work of Levinas may be subsumed under phenomenological thought (Kearney and Rainwater 1996) but could also be considered as post modern, post phenomenological given that he is concerned with giving primacy to ethics over ontology (Levinas 1984 in Hand 1989). Finally Lacan has already been included within the section on psychoanalysis but could also be considered with post structural thought given his interest in the destabilising effects of language (Sarup 1993) likewise Kristeva and Irigaray also have an interest in psychoanalysis.

Alongside these complex narratives runs, in counter point, phenomenology (Husserl 1923, 1929, Merleau-Ponty 1962) which might be viewed as another version of the polarising structure of thesis, antithesis and synthesis compared to the subversive and fragmenting nature of post structuralism and post modernism. For Merleau-Ponty, however, there was never the intention of an elementary compound or fundamental object of humanity, just plurality of being (Rainwater & Kearney 1996). Clearly though setting the phenomenology of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty in counter point to
the above writers has difficulties as phenomenological thought already runs through or is connected to them. The work of counterpoint tends, nonetheless, to be pitched against as well as running parallel, being concerned with points of meeting as well as changes of position (Hoad 1996). These shifts in relationship are not dissimilar to Merleau-Ponty’s ideas about the chiasm (1994). The chiasma involves an inversion of parallel words in phrases (Hoad 1996) for example: “a certain blue of the sea is so blue that only blood would be more red” (Claudel cited by Merleau-Ponty 1964:132). Like the optic chiasma which is a crossover, meeting point or junction the means to sight has a problem that right at the meeting point a knot of pathways is created but this also creates a blind spot (something reconsidered in the section on Derrida).

In view of the important connections and differences between phenomenology, existentialism and post structural, post modern thought the writers chosen for this second part of chapter three will mainly include: Kierkegaard (1941,1944,1985), Heidegger (1962, 1968, 1971, 1982), Blanchot (1993), Derrida (1978, 1983, 1987, 1990), Levinas 91969, 1984, 1998), Kristeva (1974, 1983) and Irigaray (1999) respectively. As well as continuing the debate about intentionality the intention here is to also begin to shift the position of phenomenology from the stance of deconstruction to deconstructed thus to attempt an inversion. Momentarily the writer is also caught in realising that the indefinable quality of phenomenology is becoming subject to the need to stabilise meaning through the discourse of writing.

3.4.1 Kierkegaard:

It is the void, although not necessarily the one claimed by Merleau-Ponty (1962) that concerns Kierkegaard (1944), and it is not just the nature of the void so much as what happens when we come face to face with it, that he addresses. These ideas are important because they begin to illuminate what it is about the unknown that we dread. Dread is a twofold predicament because it reminds us of and confronts us with that which we fear, whilst potentially announcing a problematic of positing the synthesis which we may choose over dread. Dread is the terror of realising the infinite unknown which opens up the possible as freedom and our reaction to it can be
'grasping at finiteness' which at the same moment leaves us guilty for refusing the choice of possibility (Kierkegaard 1944 in Freidman 1964:369).

It is right at the very moment, when we are on the verge of a gap, disjuncture or disruption of some kind that something different becomes possible, but it is whilst on the edge of the known (and the unknown) that we step back, or is it that we get thrown back. Our fear gets in the way and we cannot get too near the void, the nothing. For Kierkegaard freedom can be too dreadful because we are thrown back, away from the dread of being who we are (Kierkegaard 1944 in Friedman 1991). The refusal is a rebuttal of freedom and rather than choose freedom which represents the unknown we choose to fill the void with something rather than wait in unknowing. For Kierkegaard (1944) we either fill the void, with all kinds of doctrine or theory or alternatively we become shutup. We cannot, however, posit freedom which cannot be defined but this is different too from shutupness or the inability to speak with one's own voice.

Another problem is that we cannot make things happen, we cannot get on top of the gap or difficulty so we need to learn to notice our dread and think about it when it does happen, but of course it is usually too shocking for us to do that, so we find innumerable ways to avoid/fill the void. To be 'educated by dread' (Kierkegaard 1944) is, however, to be always open to the world:

"When such a person, therefore, goes out from the school of possibility, and knows more thoroughly than a child knows the alphabet that he can demand of life absolutely nothing, and that terror, perdition, annihilation, dwell next door to every man, and he has learned the profitable lesson that every dread which alarms [aengste] may the next instant become a fact, he will then interpret reality differently, he will extol reality, and even when it rests upon him heavily he will remember that after all it is far, far lighter than the possibility was." (Kierkegaard 1944 in Friedman 1964:371)

Thus ultimately it is only when we can face that which we fear most that we can truly learn and learn to speak from our experience, but first we must allow possibility which, 'corresponds precisely to the future' (Kierkegaard (1944). A state of uncertainty or unknowing is demanded.

Essentially Kierkegaard is less interested in our attaining goals in life than the means by which we live, which is nevertheless the goal (Kierkegaard 1956 in Friedman (1964). An aspect of such means are related to learning whereby:
“While objective thought translates everything into results, and helps mankind to cheat, by copying these off and reciting them by rote, subjective thought puts everything in process and omits the result; partly because as an existing individual he is constantly in process of coming to be, which holds true of every human being who has not deceived himself into becoming objective, inhumanly identifying himself with speculative philosophy in the abstract.” (Kierkegaard 1956 in Friedman 1964:114-5)

Hence subjective experience is crucial in thinking about the world and can be seen to be the means by which we learn rather than by being able to repeat some one else’s theory. Cheating is here concerned with the ways in which we avoid experience and seek to explain the world through abstractions such as grand theories. This critique of totalising theories has much in common with postmodernism and also highlights like phenomenology that we cannot step outside our own existence ‘It means that knowledge has a relationship to the knower’ (Kierkegaard 1956 in Friedman 1964:116). Further, like Merleau-Ponty (1962) Kierkegaard gives primacy to the ‘how’ over the ‘what’ the difference being that he is not concerned with ‘demeanour, expression or the like’ which could be seen as the way one embodies what one says but:

“..rather it refers to the relationship sustained by the existing individual, in his own existence, to the content of his utterance. Objectively the interest is focussed merely on the thought content, subjectively on the inwardness. At its maximum this inward ‘how’ is the passion of the infinite, and the passion of the infinite is the truth…. An objective uncertainty held fast in an appropriation-process of the most passionate inwardness is the truth, the highest attainable truth for an existing individual.” (Kierkegaard 1956 in Friedman 1964:116).

When we are acquiring knowledge or rather learning we need to remain in doubt and at the same time in touch with our own experience and the way we reveal our relationship to knowing through our existence. We cannot prove our existence by thinking and in fact if we were able to think from such a dissociated state we would not exist according to Kierkegaard (1956 in Friedman 1964). Husserl’s operative intentionality seems also less concerned with that which can be postulated and more with the involuntary moment when we reveal something of our nature and whilst something may be accidentally betrayed it nevertheless has meaning (Merleau-Ponty 1962).

The phenomenology of Husserl (1929) and Merleau-Ponty (1962,1964b) seem related to Kierkegaard’s (1944, 1956) ideas in that the natural attitude is in common with abstract thought although Kierkegaard goes much further in suggesting that whilst objective or abstract thought also removes us from our very existence reflexivity takes
us further towards isolation too. So whilst we might attempt a separation out of objective knowing there is a subtle difference with regard to bracketing. There is no clear separation for Kierkegaard (1956 in Friedman 1964) and no need to practice the disinterested stance of bracketing but an ethical imperative to be interested in existence. In the end the possible is not what we learn which will always remain subject to the unknown but the fact that we are in process which cannot be evidenced:

"The ethical lays hold of each individual and demands that he refrain from all contemplation, especially of humanity and the world; for the ethical, as being the internal, cannot be observed by an outsider. It can be realized only by the individual subject, who alone can know what it is that moves within him."

(Kierkegaard 1956 in Friedman 1964: 117)

In the sense that our existence has to be taken into account and cannot be separated out (bracketed) Heidegger (1962) has something in common with Kierkegaard (1944, 1956 in Friedman 1964)

3.4.2 Heidegger:

Heidegger's main project, a phenomenological investigation into the meaning of Being, raises questions about the difficulty of attempting to explicate Being from the standpoint of intentionality and consciousness as opposed to our every day or 'practical engagement' with the world which needs no definition (Kearney and Rainwater 1996, Cooper 1990). Dasein, taken from the German, translates literally as being-there and was Heidegger's term for simultaneously explicating being, being-in-the-world and being-in-the-world-with-others (Heidegger 1962). Its usage was also the attempt to remove the difficulty of terms such as self or consciousness because of their empirical, metaphysical and Cartesian undertones (Cooper 1990). Friedman suggests that Heidegger's use of the term Dasein implicates being as a state into which we are thrown and his concern with the person rather than consciousness is a concern with awareness of that throwness rather than with notions of selfhood (Friedman 1964). Throwness cannot be found via a layer of perception, which is too bound up with consciousness and intentionality, but is noticed in the moment of turning, towards but mostly away, and not directly gazed upon (Heidegger 1962:174). Furthermore it is not to be evidenced by comparison with some pre existing knowledge of Dasein:
“From the existential-ontological point of view, there is not the slightest justification for minimizing what is ‘evident’ in states-of-mind, by measuring it against the apodictic certainty of a theoretical cognition of something which is present-at-hand.” (Heidegger 1962:175)

Pre existing knowledge which could be viewed as the known is the domain of the mode of engagement Heidegger called the present-at-hand (Heidegger 1962) and can be compared to two other domains of engagement as a way of unravelling something of Dasein. Heidegger’s modes of interaction with the world namely: the everyday, taken for granted skills and practices of the ready-to-hand mode; the abstract, theoretical, reflective knowledge of the present-at-hand mode and; the unready-to-hand mode which is only manifest when things go awry (Heidegger 1962). Whilst the ready-to-hand mode suggests a set of tools or skills are available they can only be drawn on authentically if they are also withdrawn from use, the focus must engage on the work at hand. The ready-to-hand is given primacy over and precedes the present-at-hand and could be viewed as the learning resulting out of our encounter with the world but once it shifts and becomes explanation it also becomes the present-at-hand. The unready-to-hand is important because as well as the explicit use of something when a situation has gone awry, it infers something not to hand, something missing and importantly the other modes will then become unready-to-hand and interfere with our ability to attend to that which is missing (Heidegger 1962). Dasein is subsequently best glimpsed through the ready-to-hand and even more through the unready-to-hand although the former can also hinder the latter. The unready-to-hand could be considered to occur as a moment when something missing or in the way or unknown disturbs our set ways, and it is only through a setting aside of the present-at-hand which seems concerned with knowing, that dasein will unfold. The idea of withdrawal from use of tools or skills and the requirement to give ascendancy to the ready-to-hand over the present-at-hand appears to infer an act of epoché. Perhaps what Heidegger missed was that, given his own ideas about agency as the “degree to which the world is a human one, whose structure, articulation and very existence are functions of human agency” (Cooper 1990:58) he like others became the agent of his world view. Is this agency also inevitably caught up in the directing of attention to one group of phenomena whilst setting aside others and indeed does he not end up referring back to that which was set aside and one could say this always involves turning from one thing as opposed to the other.
The idea of turning away begins to hint at a critique of intentionality which is more concerned with the directing our gaze towards. The critique of intentionality from the standpoint of a concern with the person as an embodied being in part hinges on the difference between the idea of the transcendental ego as spectator who can stand aside and describe as opposed to the person as agent and therefore as influencing our understanding of the world and our thrownness in it (Cooper 1990). Whilst the object or phenomenon was also seen by Heidegger (1962) as not having a causal or external origin it was not merely seen as composed by consciousness:

"The idea of a subject which has intentional experiences merely inside its own sphere and is not yet outside it but encapsulated within itself is an absurdity which misconstrues the basic ontological structure of the being that we ourselves are." (Heidegger 1962:64)

Husserl’s intentional ego as engaged in the act of epoche is problematic, especially given the nature of human agency according to Heidegger (1962), nevertheless the recognition of the epoche can lead to a re examining of what was originally set aside too. Whilst such acts of bracketing or setting aside seem inescapable, it is simultaneously possible to keep noticing the interplay between what is noticed and what is rejected thus even bracketing cannot be totally refuted. Simultaneously bracketing can also be viewed as dubious. For example the ready-to-hand mode, which Heidegger gives primacy to over the present-at-hand mode, is inextricably bound up with the world of experience and set within a cultural context (Heidegger 1962). The paring off this cultural layer (as though it is somehow separable rather than integral) results from the intentional ego. This separation is problematic because of the loss of ‘referential totality’ which prevents even tools becoming mere objects reduced to the categorisation of the present-at-hand (Cooper 1990). Questions now arise about the experiential and physical world.

Heidegger (1962) disagrees with the idea of a natural attitude engaged in positing theory as a ‘natural’ phenomenon but perhaps this is just a play with words, given earlier discussions of the idea that the human tendency is perhaps to categorise and theorise as a way of disengaging from experience. So although Heidegger (1962) might consider the realm of experience to be more ‘natural’ it could also be considered a natural attitude to seek to demur from experience, something highlighted for example by Kierkegaard (1985) being related to dread and by Freud (1973) as
being related to repression, repetition and the unconscious. Additionally Cooper (1990) points out the nature of the époche as a suspension of judgements related to spatio-temporal reality. It could be considered that bracketing means creating one's own gap, segregating out the physical world in a mind body split. Such an attempt, where we thus become the creator of the rupture, rather than allowing ourselves to be thrown could be viewed as a way of attempting control of dread. This leads to questioning whether intentionality is, therefore, in our control through a phenomenological reduction or itself a natural attitude and like consciousness always a retreat, disguising experience or further veiling the real. Admittedly Husserl sees what is bracketed as requiring attention too but it is the idea that we can create the rift that suggests something otherwise at play here, something unknown forcing intentionality. Badiou (2002:3) argues that the forcing of any absolute truth will eventually meet a resistance and he calls this point "the 'unnameable' of the situation" and it can never be forced. And yet paradoxically this unnameable "is so intimate in the situation that it doesn't even tolerate having a proper name...." and it is a limitation that "...... is so Real for the truth that there isn't a name in the field of truth-construction." (Badiou 2002:3)

Moreover Dasein, which cannot be gazed upon still presents us with the enigmatic as the fact that Being ultimately cannot be known and yet its thereness 'stares it in the face' (Heidegger 1962). The modes of being related to the present-at-hand can only be accessed by a direct look, which in a sense is where we tend, therefore, to direct attention thus we also tend to take for granted the ready-to-hand and presuppose the unready-to-hand (1962:102). The difference between what can be gazed upon and what can only be glimpsed obliquely at certain moments are connected to Heidegger's use of the terms facticity and factuality (1962) which specify the difference between what is 'matter of fact' and what is factual or as Heidegger puts it what requires "laying down of an axiom from which a sequence of propositions is deductively derived" (1962:28). What we need to remember is that the question we find ourselves asking serves to reveal, more than any reasoned answer, that we are caught up by Being and the 'matter of fact' which is facticity is there prior to and out of reach of any proof. As Heidegger states:
"The concept of 'facticity' implies that an entity 'within- the-world' has Being-in-the-world in such a way that it can understand itself as bound up in its 'destiny' with the Being of those entities which it encounters within its own world". (Heidegger 1962:82)

The extent to which Merleau-Ponty's (1962) phenomenology emerges through Husserl or Levinas is unclear (Loewenthal and Snell 2003) but he likewise disagrees on the point of a universal constituting consciousness recognising, nevertheless, that we need to break with 'our familiar acceptance' of the world (pxiv) and yet a complete reduction is impossible not least because of the way the body institutes meaning (p147). Merleau-Ponty (1962:198) attempts an interplay between the two positions of the word exist namely: "one exists as a thing or one exists as a consciousness." He takes a position that is neither mind nor body in a literal sense and yet requires both.

"The experience of our own body, on the other hand, reveals to us an ambiguous mode of existing. If I try to think of it as a cluster of third person processes-'sight', 'motility', 'sexuality'-I observe that these 'functions' cannot be interrelated, and related to the external world, by causal connections, they are all obscurely drawn together and mutually implied in a unique drama. Therefore the body is not an object. For the same reason, my awareness of it is not a thought, that is to say, I cannot take it to pieces and reform it to make a clear idea. Its unity is always implicit and vague. It is always something other than what it is, always sexuality and at the same time freedom, rooted in nature at the very moment when it is transformed by cultural influences, never hermetically sealed and never left behind." (Merleau-Ponty 1962:198).

Ultimately the only way to know is to live and more to be lost in the living but the knowing that comes from the transcendental reflection remains only the thought that is divorced from the living experience. Knowledge is, however, seen only as possibility. A kind of afterwardsness is always at play in knowing, which is at best a temporary (and temporal) state of affairs. We are always in process, passing through and in passing through we are under way which for Heidegger (1968) means thinking is now possible and for Kierkegaard (1944 in Friedman 1964) "the possible corresponds precisely to the future". There is a way of thinking that involves a different kind of remembering that is neither acquisitive nor possessive. Remembering is not to be seen as memorizing things, for example what people say to us, (for example, in either research or psychotherapy) but rather it is something we hold and are held by, it endures with us and in psychotherapy, for example, is most recognizable when "the past and present make sense of each other" (Friedman 1964).
Perhaps what eventually interested Heidegger, above knowing, was thinking as being underway (Heidegger 1968) and then beyond ontology and thinking about being towards “participation of human beings in the ‘happening’ of being” (Kearney and Rainwater 1996). As such the language of poetry becomes more than a vehicle for explaining being and more a mode that accomplishes being, itself participating in being, representing a realisation that in the end Heidegger turned from the problematic of positing, even on Dasein (Heidegger 1971). Alongside the importance of the poetic lies the difficulty of language and Heidegger’s recognition that being can never be reduced to the signified, it lies elsewhere and otherwise than signification (1962, 1971). In poetry there is the chance that what lies beyond language can be hinted at. Again Badiou (2002:1) is informed by Heidegger quoting “The poet always speaks as if the being was expressed for the first time.” Thus knowledge is repetition whereas truth is full of possibility and:

For the process of truth to begin something must happen. Knowledge as such only gives us repetition, it is concerned with what already is. For truth to affirm its newness there must be a supplement. This supplement is committed to chance-it is unpredictable, incalculable, it is beyond what it is. I call this an event. A truth appears in its newness because an eventful supplement interrupts repetition.” (Badiou 2002:1)

In essence no single phenomenological line can be taken with argument and counter argument continually displacing each other so that rather than drawing on either transcendental phenomenology or hermeneutic phenomenology an interplay becomes the position taken up. However a question does arise about creativity here related to poetry, not literally as poem but as poetic (for example Bachelard 1994) and how this could influence the development of a phenomenological, post phenomenological methodology. How might well worn paths of knowing (repetition) be interrupted without a forcing, perhaps more through permitting as in suffering.

3.4.3 Derrida:

This section begins by exploring Derrida’s view of language (1978,1998) which has implications for the Husserlian project and then moves on to his critique of the Freudian unknown (Derrida 1990), this time through the concept of the dream knot (Freud 1991). A principle concern with language and difference and indeed the relationship between the two demonstrates the way language conveys meaning and
yet also omits something, this absence is an important facet of Derrida's thought (Derrida 1978, 1983, 1998). Derrida highlights the way binary oppositions in language lead to one signified having presence over another but the absent always leaves a trace and has the potential to destabilise the present (Sarup 1993). There are a number of factors which destabilise language, or invoke a separation known as difference and especially relevant here are the lack of binding between sign and signified and the unknown presence or trace of the absent sign. In a sense the trace reaches out in all directions and as Sarup (1993: 33) puts it: "No one can make the 'means' (the sign) and the 'end' meaning become identical" and the attempt to bind them is a way of creating a closure whereas Derrida's thought attempts to reveal the bind and subvert it. This opening occurs through identifying, in the text, moments where a privileged term has primacy over another, which remains concealed, and yet rests on the exclusion of the other (Derrida 1998). In this way it could be seen that the known in fact rests on the unknown which continuously threatens to destabilise. We become subject to the trace of the unknown.

In Husserlian phenomenology it is argued that nothing is allowable outside the transcendental presence, the image, and Derrida sees this presence as disregarding the historicity that precedes intentionality and the problem of non meaning or non being (Derrida 1978). In a sense then intentionality cannot address anything otherwise than what is present as the immediate which Sarup (1993) highlights as the certain or known. Underlying this certainty and hidden from it is the double problem with language where the sign and the signified are never identical and where the subject can never be separated from language. This seems to indicate a 'characteristic' of the unknown which can never, therefore, be symbolised through language.

Another aspect of Derrida's thought which could be seen to lead to a recognition of the destabilising effects of language arises from the term difference the definition for which comes from the French 'differance' and includes the route for both 'to differ' as difference and 'to defer' as to put off in time, postpone presence (Derrida 1978). In other words the play of language leads to a continual slipping from one thing to another, the instability and continual uncertainty open up differences along the way. If one is able to wait with this process there are moments, often a kind of playful punning, that manages to speak the unspeakable. The interplay between these two
meanings ultimately leads to an aporia, an insoluble contradiction or paradox in a text's meanings which leaves one at a loss, leaves one unknowing.

One can see from previous sections of this chapter, that primacy is generally given to the known although various writers have tried to show how the unknown can destabilise the known. One instance of this destabilising effect is apparent in the conscious; unconscious, binary opposition. It could be suggested that the idea of consciousness had primacy until Freud (1915) brought the term unconscious to the fore. A metaphor that Freud (1915 in Gay 1995) uses to illustrate how links and connections are difficult to predict in the unconscious is through the idea of pearls on an invisible chain which means that the way the pearls are connected is largely unknown but particular pearls can also appear as if connected when they are not and vice versa. In a sense this tangle begins to illustrate something of unknown processes at play but which it is argued can be untangled through psychoanalysis. What also begins to transpire here is the varying ways in which authors conceptualise the unknown through different language usage, in Freud's (1925, 1923) case the topographical and structural models conceptualise the unknown. Here also important because of Derrida's (1998) critique of psychoanalysis and the way the unknown is conceptualised as something which can be known, albeit only in terms of what emerges from it. His concern with Freud's paper about another tangle, the oomphalos or the dream knot, illustrates the problem of that which remains unknown and unacknowledged and yet is inherent in such theories (Derrida 1998).

As well as the unconscious as a form of the unknown Freud was concerned with the oomphalos which is the knot through we can never pass, it is the place that marks something beyond knowing, "the point of contact with the unknown," (1953:186). The dream knot becomes the point in Freud's theory that represents something paradoxical within the whole Freudian metaphysics and is Derrida's (1990) focus for a critique of the unknown as purely waiting to be found as in the unconscious. Derrida (1998) highlights the knot, the oomphalos, Freud's own idea to show that there is always something that is beyond knowing and indeed he points it out as the "unknowable". This seems to be something other than the unconscious and is spoken of, as the knot or tangle, in the text on dreams (Freud 1953). Furthermore Freud's concept of resistance as a resistance to knowing, albeit of the returning repressed,
indicates a resistance inherent in psychoanalysis, something that psychoanalysis does not want to know. Derrida (1990) points again to the problematic of language where the dream knot instead represents the way language cannot account for that which is absent or has no meaning. It seems then that the resistance to the unknown comes about not so much from the returning repressed as from the tangle caused by various known concepts which cannot leave room for the unknown as unknowable. Thus the resistance spoken of in psychoanalysis is a resistance to the unknown as unknowable on the part of psychoanalysis, which comes about at the juncture of various pathways, a chiasm, and a blind spot.

The nature of language as a problematic of truth is developed by Derrida (1978) and opens up the moment of the resistance to knowing as arising out of the intersection of strands of knowing (the knot) which then blinds us to the possibility of the unknown. These ideas are particularly important in this discussion given that they highlight another view of the unknown as unknowable. In essence Derrida’ ideas could be viewed as an intersection for psychoanalytic, phenomenological and post-structural ideas. Additionally when the absent is made present, the unconscious made conscious or the unknown becomes known, the penalty is a presence incorporated into the binding of language, bound and knotted and then no longer able to function as subversive. It becomes relegated to the category of the known. Some of the themes identified by Derrida arise in the work of other writers such as Levinas (1983, Hand 1989) Kristeva (1974, 1975, 1995) and Irigaray (1996, 1999) each of whom will now be briefly discussed.

3. 4. 4 Levinas:

The discussion of Levinas’ work is an outline only in this chapter as many of his ideas have implications for the way knowledge and methodology, and research method are developed in chapter five because of the ethical questions his ideas provoke. Just as Heidegger’s phenomenological investigation of Being captures a shift from transcendental phenomenology to hermeneutic phenomenology as a concern with our being-in-the-world (Cooper 1994) the thought of Levinas represents a shift from ontology to ethics (Oakley 1989). Levinas’ critique of Husserl’s phenomenology was based on the problem of turning phenomenology into “a universally valid science”
that appears to take existence, along with its historicity, out of theory (Hand 1989). The issue of being as the primary relationship over the relationship with the Other also leads Levinas to a questioning of ontology and the way knowing takes precedence over the relational, including the knowledge of being (Hand 1989). These two aspects, that is the idea of an ethical relationship through acceptance of the other as radically different and the relational as preceding knowing are addressed here because of the two interrelated ways in which they view the unknown.

The relational as ethical is concerned with the unknown other, the other whose difference is not different from me, which always infers a return of the self to the centre of being, but infinitely otherwise and thus not reducible to intentionality (Levinas 1983).

"The Infinite in its absolute difference withholds itself from presence in me; the infinite does not come to me in a contemporaneousness like that in which noema and noesis meet simultaneously together, nor in the way in which interlocutors responding to one another may meet. The Infinite is not indifferent to me. It is in calling me to other men that transcendence concerns me. It is this unique intrigue of transcendence, the non absence of the Infinite is neither presence, nor re-presentation. Instead, the idea of the Infinite is to be found in my responsibility for the Other." (Levinas 1983:113)

We can never know the other least of all through the image of intentionality, an eidetic form of knowledge, but rather the other puts us into question so that we can query our responsibility for the other. We therefore neither need to know the other or accept what we think we know of ourselves, relationship begins from the place of unknowing. Just as the other is irreducible to the intentional act so does the other resist totalising forms of knowledge and in any case something always remains beyond what can be expressed through language.

Levinas identifies two acts within knowing which are problematic namely, appropriation and grasping which result in a disregard for the otherness of the other (Levinas 1984 in Hand 1989). The grasping of knowledge offers the relief of knowing by maintaining a presence so that any reminder of something absent or otherwise, such as death can be ignored. This is a replay of the Cartesian "cogito ergo sum" which here is seen to replace any hint of non being with thought. Likewise any suggestion of otherness can be appropriated before the reminder of what is unknown can have the same frightening intimation. Even the act of knowing is
replaced with the known as knowledge which displaces anything other. Responsibility for the other cannot be pre ordained from some generalizable theory which has come about from the above conditions. Responsibility "is not a practical stop gap measure designed to console knowledge in its failure to match being" (Levinas 1984 in Hand 1989:85). Levinas (1984 in Hand 1989) calls for a non intentional consciousness in order to face our unknown destiny, glimpsed in relation with the unknown other. This non intentional cannot however be planned through frameworks either theoretical or indeed what is claimed to be ethical. Levinas (1983) seems to critique the intentional through the idea that the unknown lies beyond the dialectic, for example within phenomenology, as between birth and death and noema and noesis, and the possibility of the other, as unknown, is the potential to disrupt this kind of closure.

What begins here is something of a knot between transcendental phenomenology, hermeneutic phenomenology and Levinasian ethics. For example we cannot map the ethical relationship and this kind of unknowing might throw us back towards the intentional and/or the ontological. The ethical does not however seem to rest on the phenomenological and yet emerges beyond either consciousness or being. Something of the relationship between these themes has important questions for epistemology and methodology and will be further developed in chapter five.

3.4.5 Kristeva:

Absence is a continual theme, it seems, in this consideration of the unknown and brings the discussion to Kristeva for whom absence is perhaps a failure of language, a loss of words that illustrates the difference between the semiotic and the symbolic (Moi 1986). The semiotic is situated alongside pre Oedipal processes, the pulsations of which are accumulated in the chora which both precedes and is repressed by the entry into language, beginning with the mirror stage and completing at the Oedipal phase (Kristeva 1974 in Moi 1986). The experiences emanating from the chora are, therefore, never placed or named, although it is necessary for entry into language. Whilst the symbolic, linked as it is to the oedipal processes, is a paternal function, the unplaced semiotic is pre oedipal and represents the maternal. The maternal is thus unnameable. In order to have language there had to be something to differentiate
from, and through the process of individuation somewhere to arrive but the chora remains left behind, unknown, enigmatic, beyond the symbolic. Its pulsations disrupt and suggest itself through “contradiction, meaninglessness, silences and absences” (Moi 1986:13), which are what lie betwixt and between the signifying structure. Given the importance of these unnameable bodily processes the differentiation from which something becomes nameable one wonders whether, without the unknown or mysterious, anything can ever be known.

Where Kristeva’s ideas become important in this project are in the idea of moments of transgression where something previously unspeakable can be symbolised (Sarup 1993). This breakdown occurs when the symbolic order can no longer sustain the zest of the ever present, but building semiotic pulsations, the symbolic can in effect no longer hold it together. The energy from the semiotic is usually directed psychosomatically but in moments of rupture and revolution it can change the symbolic structures involving sound, movement and sight as well as metonymy and metaphor (Kristeva 1974 in Moi 1986). Metaphor involves the use of one word for another word and metonymy word to word connections (Bowie 1991). What occurs in these processes mirrors the psychoanalytic functions of condensation and displacement where the signifier holds multiple layers of meaning or swerves across meanings, respectively (Bowie 1991). The kinds of transgression that can evoke these processes are connected to the poetic and loaded with the pre oedipal, pre verbal ‘something’ that needs to be deciphered (Kristeva 1983 in Moi 1986). The moment of transgression is thus the moment when something unknown can break through but for Kristeva (1975 in Moi 1986:28), it seems, the break through will not be noticed in the unifying structure of language but in the ways we can “make free with the language code” through the poetic. It is such transgressions that defeat the unifying processes of the transcendental ego, the poetic is therefore beyond intentionality.

The symbolic appears to represent something of a unifying order and a way of positioning oneself whereas the semiotic seems to represent something of the chaotic, undifferentiated, corporeal experiencing. The continual process of interaction between the symbolic and semiotic sets up a series of binary oppositions which are inevitable but which also close out anything viewed as waste according to Grosz (1986). This waste is literal in terms of bodily waste but also represents what is
socially unacceptable. It could be argued that the socially constructed need to deny such excess is also a way of closing down on the unknown as the unacceptable or what Kristeva (1982) calls the abject which both attracts and repels. The abject comes about in the necessary separation from the maternal object, the other who is outcast, with which contact needs to be resumed if the subject is to be able to bear the other, and counter balance the desire to murder (Kristeva 1995). Otherwise could be seen to lead to violence to the other so as Kristeva (1995:120) states: “you will displace your hatred into thought; you will devise a logic that defends you from murder and madness”. Hence we need to maintain a separation and a link between the objective and the subjective, a total separation leads to murder of the other and a fusion leads to a deadly, narcissistic view of others as being there for our use. The paradoxical space of merger and separation becomes a kind of marginal space, somewhere disturbing but neither yet fixed or yet fragmented, from which to read the text (for Kristeva 1995, this is the sacred text, for example the bible) but it is a risky place full of the possibility of violence or madness.

In these ideas emerges a questioning of the transcendentual ego, of intentionality and therefore of phenomenology and simultaneously a recognition that the unifying structure of language has a purpose. Concurrently the fragmenting effects of the semiotic threaten mayhem. Amidst these two functions is the potential for new ways of viewing the world, for something unknown to break through and also recognition of the unknown as sometimes unnameable, sometimes nameable through transgression and as space between.

3.4.6 Irigaray:

In some ways, Irigaray (1999) like Kristeva, is interested in the maternal, the feminine and the way what it represents is appropriated by the phallocentricity and logocentricity of western thought. Sarup (1993) points out how Irigarary views language as ‘male’ a position from which to master meaning and posit various projects. In fact this projection just reflects back the already known in such a way that what remains unknown is that this reflection is simply what was originally projected out. In this way the imaginary, in Lacan’s (Bowie 1991) sense, is the illusory place which seeks to centralise and stabilise one’s position in the world and
the symbolic becomes the means to this end. Previous sections have already argued how this need for stability is a protection against death but Irigaray sees the feminine as the reminder of birth and hence also of death and the transitory nature of things, in fact 'nature' is synonymous with woman (Sarup 1993). The focus shifts here to the meaning of nature as "essential qualities, innate character, vital powers, creative and regulative power in the world" (Hoad 1996:309). Thus the suppression of women could be seen to be a way of grasping power through knowing whereas women represent the unimaginable as the unknown and subsequently the memo (a note for something to be remembered) for what has been smothered.

Irigaray (1999) shows how phenomenology whether a concern with thought (intentionality) or with being (Dasein) means that woman neither appears or comes into being. She provides the space for creation but cannot become herself, being excluded from the kind of hermeneutic circle set up by the masculine. Being then cannot acknowledge difference being more concerned with indifference to her plight and phenomenology re enacts the return to the centre. Irigaray's (1996) project, unlike some feminists is to create an opening through a meeting between, rather than a replacement of one order with another which just makes another play for mastery. Whether she is juxtaposing the sexual difference between man and woman, which is the main difference for her, irreducibly so, or attempting a dialogue between different ideas she wants to create an opening which she then refuses to close. From these kinds of opening, she argues, there will then continue to be a possibility for new meanings. The setting out or fixing of a theory or meta narrative from these meanings is not just unnecessary but deadening because knowing then just continues to reflect the already said, thus reflexivity is itself problematic.

Irigaray (1996:7) does however believe that, if permitted, thought can "liberate itself from imitation and create its own way". The kind of conditions that permit thought seem related to the idea of a 'clearing of a space' to use Irigaray's (1999) phrase, which is where the unspeakable becomes speakable. The space in which this can happen is probably more important precisely because like air we forget its presence, it can only be experienced as absence, a silence. The nature of the space as an absence seems of more importance being the place of life as opposed to death by logos. Several themes become crucial for the unknown here (already the danger of a system
appears) in both permitting an opening and maintaining it. Thus anything that leads to closure is death. Death would be any system or generalizable theory that thinks itself complete whereas life emerges from an encounter that does not attempt to reduce one to the other in order to synthesise an homogeneous blend. Thus the relational becomes crucial requiring a discourse of difference, and the relationship between man and woman, masculine and feminine as the site for the origin of difference that acknowledges “you who will never be me or mine” (Irigaray 1996:12). Such difference will be experienced as hurtful only if one wishes to play the imaginary game that reduces the other to the culture of the one.

3.5 Conclusions

Phenomenology, in particular the phenomenological description, is helpful because it creates a delay in theorising calling for patience and the ability to tolerate suffering in the sense of permitting thoughts to come towards us. A problematic occurs, however, where phenomenology is helpful in sustaining that delay but eventually leads us to succumb to the generation of theory from our experience. This is perhaps an element of Levinas’ (1983, 1984) critique especially when the other is eventually reduced to a theoretical construction. There is also the recognition of a confusion between meaning and understanding where perception can be seen as both limiting or obscuring our engagement with the world as well as in itself constituting creativity. The phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty (1962, 1964b) is particularly relevant because meaning is viewed as interrelational experience. In view of the way the other can call our assumptions into question the interrelational is seen as helpful as a way of limiting the tendency to reduce the world to the already known (albeit maybe unrecognised) of our own position rather than the recognition that there is always something beyond, or hither to, knowing.

Juxtaposing phenomenology with other views is meeting without incorporating one with another so that new ways of viewing the unknown have possibility. Whilst Freud (Gay 1995) conceptualised the unknown as unconscious he was also unclear whether, for example, transference is a phenomenon of the present or a replay of earlier relationships or both. Thus a degree of uncertainty is revealed. However when a theory becomes fixed and taken up as truth this uncertainty gets lost and inherent in
the complexity of theoretical knowing is a place, a knot, which indicates a limit beyond which the knower cannot go. This knot of concealment marks the limit of knowing, illuminating how the threads of knowledge can entangle us and hide the reason from the knower which is that their own knowing creates a blind spot; a chiasma. This happens especially when we confuse the biological with the relational because the biological infers something as demonstrable, provable, observable leading to the reduction of experience to theory.

Even though the unconscious, became such a theory, it could still be seen as one way of thinking about one aspect of the unknown providing an example of how something unknown can become known. The allowing of a time and space for thought through the relational as including dimensions of time past, present and future and the one meeting the other through a continual process of translation, detranslation, retranslation, after Laplanche (1999). In this meeting the unknown is the other symbolised by the enigmatic signifier which will always elude us and yet sustain our interest. As the unknower the psychotherapist can engage the other in free association which begins with conscious experiencing with an attempt to hear something other (unconscious element) and yet this can only be known once it is conscious. Thus the known as conscious may be the starting place for any investigation of the unknown. A difficulty with this way of viewing the unknown is that it also reveals the unknown and the way the unknown becomes known are defined as if known and knowable.

The psychotherapist as an unknower is required to tolerate a state of suffering because thought as the intentional is a relief from the anxiety of unknowing, and the death of thought. Certain forms of enquiry are seen to become caught up in this intolerance of uncertainty and phenomena can become reduced to theoretical taxonomies or generalizable models. In this chapter it has been suggested that there is always something that will remain otherwise and subjective experience cannot be totally reduced to the objective. Tolerance also means not grasping at knowing waiting until one is able to play which is related to being able to bear otherness. Paradox, for example, cannot be untangled but has to be borne. Ways of remaining open to the unknown through reverie have also been introduced because it can allow the work of mourning through the spatio-temporal interaction known as afterwardsness. The work of mourning is relevant here because of the way unknowing acts as a reminder
of various losses (Winnicott 1971, 1990) and the final unknown, death (Kierkegaard 1944).

Lacan (1977a, 1977b) shifts the focus of the unconscious, via language, to the relational where a series of separations leads to the acquisition of language which is always an attempt to close or master, through substitution, the anxiety of difference. The other invokes the unknown and so the relational always risks the possibility of an opening and of a closure. Like Lacan, Merleau-Ponty (1962) recognises that language exerts mastery over us, we are subject to language. The moment when language slips from our grasp signifies something other, characterised by forms of regaining control. Various writers, above, have highlighted how difference plays out in innumerable ways and language can reveal as well as conceal our fear of otherness. It is not, however, language as the stable system of signs that opens up difference but rather when the symbolic structure of language fails and something other, non signifying, (such as the semiotic) breaks through. If the symbolic is the name of the father then the semiotic is the maternal, the feminine which hints at another unknown which by its absence continually threatens to destabilise. The reminder of death is inherent in any thought of the unknown, it is the dread of unknowing which provokes anxiety of non being. The face of the other is yet another reminder, especially woman.

The work of Levinas (1969, 1984), Kristeva (1983, 1995) and particularly Irigaray (1996, 1999) call for a consideration of the unknown in the relational which is able to permit separateness because the other is neither reduced to the already known or to my world view. It has not escaped me that a thesis such as this inevitably gets entangled in the narratives of previous masters because one is required to show what has gone before and whose name belongs to it compared to the position I am taking up as the unknowner paradoxically seeking to demonstrate I know the unknown. This project risks, but does not intend to, reflect back the already said without anything new being given space. This difficulty illustrates the problematic of researching and then writing of something like the unknown, given the irreducibility of the other to any grand theory or personal theory of mine, whilst permitting something of that unknowable nature to be revealed albeit in a temporary way. Is it possible for this project to permit an opening for future research and thought? In particular ideas about
reverie and the ethical will be developed in the methodological deliberations of chapter five.

This chapter has involved a process of juxtaposing different ideas and perspectives, not so much to create a synthesis as to illustrate something of the phenomenological process which it is argued is concerned with the relational. The relational is not seen to lead to final understanding but rather to permit an opening between different positions so that the position of mastery is continually brought under question. Even though phenomenology is the counterpoint for a meeting with other perspectives because it has an intention of creating a rupture in our usual patterns of thought it in turn has been placed under question. In particular intentionality has been shown to always include the possibility of reinforcing the position of the cogitator. According to Heidegger (1962) the fact of our being in the world with others brings the intentional into question because we cannot separate out our cultural inheritance and speak of it without the context or indeed think about it without realising we are part of that which we investigate. Is it possible to remain open to the differences within phenomenology, between the transcendental and hermeneutic? Such questions also have implications for methodology and are taken up in chapter five.

The unknown has emerged as something always unknown and also as a state of waiting for what can be known, but the known is always provisional, tending to mix up meaning, which is not the same as knowing, with truth. Through consideration of various writers a number of ways of viewing the unknown have begun to unfold: Firstly something that remains beyond the constructions of knowledge, which might actually be impossible but has possibility; Secondly something of which we are, as yet unfamiliar or for which we do not yet have a narrative although another element would be whether we have it but just cannot speak it and; Thirdly something that is mysterious, will never be known, but which destabilises that which is known. Ultimately this chapter whilst exploring ways of viewing the unknown does not lead to the setting out of a theoretical framework as a set of principles to be followed but rather juxtaposes differing viewpoints as a way of holding contradictions some of which will inform future chapters without becoming a totalising synthesis. Whilst these ideas could be seen as a framework they are considered as provisional and the requirement to remain open to unknowing will continue in an attempt to avoid fixing
the unknown as if known. In summary it has also been shown that some writers attempt to explain the known of the unknown (e.g., Freud 1915, 1923, Bion 1962, 1970, Lacan 1977a, 1977b) whereas others attempt to hold open the question of the unknown of the unknown (e.g., Kierkegaard 1944, 1956, Derrida 1978, 1990, Levinas 1983, 1984, Irigaray 1996, 1999). The next chapter considers whether and how the unknown emerges within learning to be a psychotherapist.
4. LEARNING ABOUT THE UNKNOWN

4.1 Introduction

The aim of this study is: "to develop a methodology for exploring the unknown in the acquisition of therapeutic knowledge" by researching how psychotherapists in particular learn about the unknown. This chapter will therefore consider two areas. Firstly, a brief review of some literature will be undertaken where the unknown as unknowable will be considered in relation to learning to be a psychotherapist, with identification, of some implications for this research. Consideration will be given to learning as inferential through issues such as culture, experience (Boud 1993, Habermas 1987, Schon 1983, 1987) and being as implicated through the tacit dimension (Polanyi 1966, 1969) which addresses the unknown more explicitly as something we do not know that we know.

Secondly within the psychotherapy literature learning tends to either follow traditional views in relation to behavioural goals and outcomes or highlights questions about the role of learning as a product given the uniqueness of each situation. The former can be seen in course documentation and in the registration criteria of British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) (2005) or training standards of European Association for Psychotherapy (EAP) (1997), United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP 2005) and British Psychological Society (BPS) (2001, 2004) where learning as a product or as the evident is the dominant discourse. Further readiness to register as a psychotherapist is linked to demonstrable factors such as contact hours both in the classroom and practice, supervision and personal development time as well as behavioural outcomes which categorise learning into the domains of learning namely cognitive, practical and affective. Previous research had, however, shown the way practitioners themselves question what it means to call oneself a psychotherapist as beyond merely demonstrable outcome measures. The tolerating of uncertainty emerged as crucial with legitimation being about internal processes rather than external permission by accrediting bodies (Cayne 1998, Cayne & Loewenthal 2005). This research, whilst not intended to be generalizable, did reflect an increasing body of psychotherapeutic literature that calls for another kind of learning around wisdom, maturity and ability to respond to the ineffable and

4.2 Reviewing the Literature on Learning about The Unknown

This research potentially opens up more general issues in learning of the unknown. For example it could be seen that the unknown as an unknown factor or as unknowable could destabilise what is already known as could the problematic that how we learn is already acknowledged as being mainly inferred (Cronbach 1977, Knowles 1990) and therefore unknown. Further there is something of our very nature that remains unknowable to us, for example in terms of culture (Habermas 1987), being (Polanyi 1966, 1969) and experience (Boud 1993). However as the scope of this research is set within the context of learning to be a psychotherapist, it is not intended to develop the unknown within learning more generally. Instead a review of the literature on learning is provided within the specific context of its implications for learning about the unknown in becoming a psychotherapist. This will be done by first examining that literature where the unknown is inferred before examining the one reference found which conceptualises the unknown as unknown within a learning situation (Pramling, Norlander & Archer 2003)

For Habermas (1987) the life world as a cultural phenomenon is a form of unknown or as Brookfield (2005:241) puts it, an “enclosing totality” which remains in the background and does not lend itself to deliberate examination. It is, however, in moments when action is demanded of us (such as in psychotherapeutic practice) that the unknown layer, which paradoxically is so well known that it remains hidden, can be glimpsed. A related unknown is that of tacit knowledge, valuable within the field of the unknown even though it is concerned with the idea that “we know more than we can say” (Polanyi 1966). According to Polanyi (1966), however, the ontological aspect of tacit knowledge, which is what tacit knowledge is a knowledge of hints at the body and embodiment as a dwelling in something as a way of knowing, different
to over concentrating when meaning becomes lost. It is this indwelling that is so integral to our being that it remains only tacitly known and yet through the body it is most pertinent to all kinds of knowing. Again this points to the knowing as in the being in the situation. It is perhaps from this that we learn to speak as psychotherapists, not of the unknown, but in and from the unknowing, and most importantly perhaps it is in the speaking to the unknown other.

The idea of our unknowing being a place from which to speak was important for Rogers (1986 in Kirschenbaum and Henderson 1990:137) who also emphasises the importance of learning from experience within an ever changing world where the most important aspect of learning as a concern with change illustrates that learning how to learn and becoming more able to adapt and change were necessary if people were to cope effectively in a modern world where, for example, knowledge is continually expanding (Rogers 1961, 1983, Rogers in Kirschenbaum & Henderson 1989). The links between experience and change could also be a potential area for further thought and research into the unknown as unknowable. One problematic which might also have possibility for further research relates to the area of experiential learning in that experience, like learning, is difficult to define. Boud (1993) points to Oakshott’s ideas about the direct, immediate aspects of experience as well as aspects beyond pure sensing, including perception and consciousness and the link to meaning including the idea that experience is always contextual. In fact Oakshott’s ideas (cited by Boud 1993) appear to relate to phenomenological notions of the noetic and noematic in terms of emphasising experiencing as well as what is experienced. Yet something of experiencing, located as it is in our relation to the world, is always impossible to differentiate and always lies beyond knowing:

“Much experience, however, is multifaceted, multi layered and so inextricably connected with other experiences, that it is impossible to locate temporally or spatially. It almost defies analysis as the act of analysis inevitably alters the experience and the learning which flows from it”. (Boud 1993:7)

Further:

“experience always says less than it wishes to say, there are many readings of it, it is never exhausted and total clarity may never be reached.” (Boud 1993:16)

So like learning, our knowing from or of experience is incomplete, something is always beyond knowing or lost in translation, or even defies transformation from
experience to knowing. As well as phenomenological processes there seem to be what could be called post phenomenological (Loewenthal 2006) or post modern views of learning emerging here where learning cannot be viewed as an end product or as being a stable representation of what is experienced. Learning also involves the construction of meaning. Just as post phenomenological, post modern thought attempts to continually deconstruct forms of knowledge Brew (1993) argues that experiential learning can destabilise the known.

Brew (1993) is unusual in that she writes of the unknown and unknowing explicitly and argues for experiential learning as unlearning. She points out that experiential learning cannot be explained as accumulation of experiences in the same way as cognitive learning because of the way an experience can unravel previous experiences. She noticed how the desire to know can also run parallel with the desire not to know or to not know; the way exclusion of self knowledge from scientific knowledge can be a way of avoiding learning something that we do not want to notice to do with our own biography; the role of fear of the unknown and; the importance of phenomenology in requiring us to always look again especially when we think we know (Brew 1993).

“I think what I am referring to is the process of unlearning: the attempt to access our inner knowing; the coming face to face, again and again, with our ignorance; with our not-knowing. The highest point of knowing is not knowing. Herein lies the paradox of learning from experience.” (Brew 1993:97).

Here learning from experience becomes a way of learning about the unknown because it requires a continual questioning of ourselves and what we think we know, especially relevant for psychotherapists engaged in relational practice where much of the other’s experience is unknown to us. At the same time the unknown becomes relocated as a state of our own unknowing. As identified in the previous chapter the distinction between knowing and meaning making becomes increasingly blurred and it thus seems that learning involves an essentially interpretive process.

The unknown also emerges in the work of Schon (1983, 1987) who developed his ideas about reflective learning in response to what he saw as the messy world of experience in practice where difficulties could not always be reduced to clearly solvable problems that fell within easily identified categories of what is already
known. He saw such categorisation of the world as based within a technical rational epistemology which was unable to deal with divergent situations. He predicted that in any discipline involving practice there would arise unique cases that did not fit with such certainty and indeed practitioners would be faced with the uncertainty of not knowing (Schon 1983).

"When a practitioner makes sense of a situation he perceives to be unique, he sees it as something already present in his repertoire. To see this site as that one is not to subsume the first under a familiar category or rule. It is, rather, to see the unfamiliar, unique situation as both similar to and different from the familiar one, without at first being able to say similar or different with respect to what. The familiar situation functions as a precedent, or a metaphor, or... an exemplar for the unfamiliar one." (Schön 1983: 138)

Here there is a balancing between the known and the unknown of a situation with practitioners, such as psychotherapists, drawing on a range of previous experiences such as images, ideas and previous actions. At the same time something unique or unknown remains acknowledged about the situation as well as recognition of the ways in which what has gone before is not relevant to the situation at hand. This interaction between the known and the unknown leads to an ability to respond to the situation appropriately and in previously unthought-of ways. Schon (1983, 1987) differentiates this kind of reflection-in-action with reflection-on-action seen as a retrospective form of reflection which also has relationship with reflection in action.

Mezirow (1981, 1991) developed ideas about reflective or transformative learning as a form of perspective transformation by developing Habermas’ three learning domains as follows: the technical domain of knowing is “based upon empirical knowledge and governed by technical rules” which is concerned with the provable, observable and predictable; the practical domain addresses “communicative action” which involves intersubjectivity and mutual understanding and is concerned with the way meaning is constructed through a discourse of democracy and; the emancipatory domain addresses power being concerned with self knowledge and recognition of the ways in which we are limited by society and ourselves brought about through critical reflection. He then argues that emancipatory learning or what he calls perspective transformation is the most relevant and neglected domain of adult learning whereby people can become aware of their dependency and the reasons for it (Mezirow 1981). He defines perspective transformation as:
“the emancipatory process of becoming critically aware of how and why the structure of psycho-cultural assumptions has come to constrain the way we see ourselves and our relationships, reconstituting this structure to permit a more inclusive and discriminating integration of experience and acting upon these new understandings.” (Mezirow 1981:6)

In the above process critical reflectivity is seen as a way of facilitating change through ways of knowing that are not able to be addressed by the empirical, analytic domain which is concerned more with observable behaviour such as tasks, or skills orientated learning whereas the other two domains being concerned with learning for interpersonal understanding and perspective transformation address other aspects of knowing. In a sense what the interplay between reflective learning and interpersonal learning undertakes is the coming to know something that we do not yet know, of our own limits and the place we take up in the world, as self knowledge, alongside the communicative domain argued as “confronting the unknown” because we are faced with the other whose ideas we do not know. Metaphors, in particular, become an intermediary between what we do not yet know and something we already know albeit an image (Mezirow 1991).

“Imagination is indispensable to understanding the unknown. We imagine alternative ways of seeing and interpreting. The more reflective and open to the perspectives of others we are, the richer our imagination of alternative contexts for understanding will be. Intuition also can play a central role in identifying a strange experience. Intuition refers to immediate recognition of the experience’s meaning or significance without going through the process of intentional analysis.” (Mezirow 1991:83)

One problem with the idea of reflection has been mentioned in the previous chapter where Irigaray (1996) points out the way meta narratives can in themselves end up reflecting back the already said or known, essentially avoiding what is unknown. The interpersonal domain when it does not seek to reduce the other to the already known is important in reflective learning because of the potential for challenging our assumptions from a different perspective, from something external to our own imagination.

The two domains of learning identified above carry with them different assertions, not just about how we learn but how we learn about the unknown. These in turn raise questions about how we can then investigate learning that is concerned with meaning making or self knowledge as in learning about psychotherapy. Differentiation of these kinds of learning is particularly important in this project because of the
implications for research methodology where the communicative and transformative domains cannot be investigated through seeking causality which requires a hypothetical-deductive logic or empirical tests to validate what is essentially self knowledge and unknown outside of a particular context. Other methodologies such as hermeneutics with the concern for interpretation based on imagination and intuition or those that can elaborate personal histories and biographies become crucial in investigating these domains.

Pramling et al (2003) undertook a phenomenological investigation into the way forty children (20 boys and 20 girls) aged six, nine and fourteen conceptualised the unknown. The research was based on the premise that in a text there is always an indeterminate or unknown point which we tend to find meaning for but which also therefore reflects something of our own nature. In fact the researchers suggested that these indeterminate areas are a rich resource for finding out how children make meaning, express themselves and reveal something of themselves too. Phenomenology was argued as the methodology because of the concern with the construction of meaning. The researchers used the story of “Winnie the Pooh” as a way of introducing the unknown in the form of the “heffalump” an unknown character. Children were then interviewed about their understanding of this unknown subject based on their drawing of the heffalump. Data were analysed using Giorgi’s (1997) phenomenological method which highlighted a number of meaning units composed into eight categories comprising a general structure of the phenomenon the Unknown.

The findings demonstrated that the unknown was represented as follows: shapelessness, chameleon-like, absence, figure of fantasy, strangeness, transfer of human fears and anxiety, fictive game and associations regarding the name. The oldest group of children used fantasy most having more meaning units in the figure of fantasy and fictive game categories and it was proposed that this was to do with their developmental ability for abstract thought. The greatest differences were related to the girls in the oldest age group who demonstrated more meaning units in terms of strangeness and transfer of fears and anxiety which raised questions about how girls saw themselves compared to boys. A tentative suggestion was that boys tended to seek control by designating and defining whereas girls seemed to identify themselves
with the strange as different or misunderstood, having insight into their position as other. This research was also seen to support the idea that the unknown like a ‘gap’ in a text reveals something about the reader in the way they attempt to construct something known from something previously unknown. The research has implications for this study because the researchers found the phenomenological method helpful in allowing something unknown to become meaningful whilst arising from “the realm of the understandable, in the framework of one’s own perspective” and in its expression emerges as a question of self (Pramling et al 2003).

4.3 Learning About the Unknown in Psychotherapy

Historically the unknown has gone through a series of transformative processes within psychotherapy and appears to be approaching a critical mass. Theoretical concepts such as the unconscious (Freud 1915) became a way of understanding the unknown, even though Freud also recognised aspects of his theory which remained unknown. Freud recommended that training needed to be based on experiencing one’s own unknowing and Lacan took this issue up arguing that “what the analyst must know is how to ignore what he knows” (Felman 1987:81). In this way learning in psychoanalysis was concerned with learning from experience rather than about someone else’s experience. In post Freidians this unknowing is still in view although relocated through ideas such as negative capability and tolerance of unknowing (Bion 1962, 1970) and the unknown in the relationship between therapist and patient through ideas about the transitional space and associated phenomena between mother and child (Winnicott 1970, 1990). In chapter three these were discussed as a potential critique of the unconscious as a way of knowing the unknown rather than recognising the importance of the therapist recognising that they do not know and being able to continually tolerate the arising anxiety without the need to close the experience through a new synthesis. There does, however, appear to be a dichotomy present within psychoanalysis in that on the one hand, according to Felman (1987), there is emphasis on psychoanalysis as subject rather than the object of teaching, psychoanalysis is the teacher. Yet psychoanalysis from Freud onwards has produced a huge body of literature setting out the known objects of a theory which have come under question.
During the 1960's the way the experiencing of the relationship between therapist and patient could become replaced with theoretical positing was also questioned from a burgeoning existential phenomenological perspective by psychotherapists such as Boss (1963), Binswanger (1962), Laing (1967, 1969b) and Rogers (1951, 1961). Post modernism as a movement within psychoanalysis has created another shift with concerns about the decentering of the subject relocating the unknown to otherness through deconstruction of language and sexual difference (Irigaray 1996, 1999, Kristeva 1975, 1983b, Lacan 1977a, 1977b). The unknown can be traced through these historical twists and turns and yet remained mostly mentioned only in passing. This state of the unknown as marginal appears to be changing and is becoming associated in a much more explicit way with the very nature of the practice of psychotherapy, albeit taking various forms. If this concern with the unknown is emerging then so is the question of how we learn about the unknown which does not lend itself to being broken down into clear categories of knowing such as Bloom et al's (1956, 1964) cognitive, affective or practical domains of learning. Ways in which the unknown relates to the acquisition of knowledge which is intended to have implications for therapeutic practice need to be considered.

As some of the above ideas have already been the focus of chapter three the main emphasis on learning about the unknown in psychotherapy in this chapter will be in two areas. Firstly, the work of the existential phenomenological movement within psychotherapy as pointing to the need to learn something other than theory in psychotherapy training and practice. Secondly the way psychotherapeutic practice and learning comprises two discourses which appear to subvert each other, the known and the unknown. The discourse of the unknown or unknowing is becoming more explicit in contemporary literature and will be explored along with the implications that this evolving discourse has for the acquisition of therapeutic knowledge. The implications of various studies for issues raised by these two areas will also be outlined throughout the discussion.

4.3.1 The Existential Phenomenological Movement and Learning about Psychotherapy

The development of the Person centred approach to psychotherapy emerged out of a questioning of the way the relationship between therapist and patient seemed more
effective in enabling therapeutic change than interpretations or the therapist’s directives based on theoretical knowing (Rogers 1951, 1961). Rogers (1951) therefore began to emphasise experience as crucial in therapy, which he saw as a form of learning from experience, in the sense that the patient experienced his or herself differently in relation to the therapist. He did in a sense go on to theorise about the nature of this relationship as both necessary and sufficient for therapeutic change to take place (Rogers 1951, 1961). The emphasis on the relational aspect of therapy, in particular the three core conditions, led Rogers to undertake a wide range of empirical research focussing on various elements of the relationship but especially empathy (Kirschenbaum & Henderson 1990). However later in his career Rogers began to emphasise the relationship differently stating:

“When I am at my best as a group facilitator or therapist, I discover another characteristic. I find that when I am closest to my inner, intuitive self, when I am somehow in touch with the unknown in me, when I am perhaps in a slightly altered state of consciousness in the relationship, then whatever I do seems to be full of healing. Then simply my presence is releasing and helpful. There is nothing I can do to force this experience, but when I can relax and be close to the transcendental core of me, then I may behave in strange and impulsive ways in the relationship, ways which I cannot justify rationally, which have nothing to do with my thought processes. But these strange behaviours turn out to be right, in some odd way. At those moments it seems that my inner spirit has reached out and touched the inner spirit of the other. Our relationship transcends itself and becomes a part of something larger. Profound growth and healing and energy are present.” (Rogers 1986 in Kirschenbaum and Henderson 1990:137)

He further pointed out that this unknown aspect of the relationship was difficult to describe, could not be pre empted and had not hitherto fore been empirically researched (Rogers1986 in Kirschenbaum and Henderson 1990). The above view of the relationship also seems to infer that the therapist patient relationship is only therapeutic when some unknowing form of experiencing happens because it then means that even theories about the relationship begin to collapse. In fact perhaps they need to founder because reducing the relationship to categories like the core conditions are anathema to relating. The core conditions also raise questions about the idea of a core self whether of patient or therapist and towards the end of his life Rogers (1986) began to relocate the relationship when therapeutic as elsewhere, as spiritual.

Laing (1967) also highlighted the experiential nature of psychotherapy and in particular the relational nature of being. So when we say that something “is” we are
not saying what something is but rather what it is not, "'Is' is that no-thing whereby all things are" (Laing 1967:23). He goes on to say:

"That is to say, the ground of the being of all beings is the relation between them. This relationship is the "is," the being of all things, and the being of all things is itself no-thing. Man creates in transcending himself, in revealing himself. But what creates, wherefrom and whereto, the clay, the pot and the potter, are all not-me. I am the witness, the medium, the occasion of a happening that the created thing makes evident. Man, most fundamentally, is not engaged in the discovery of what is there, not in production, nor even in communication, nor in invention. He is enabling being to emerge from non being." (Laing 1967:23)

Laing (1967) appears to call for an ability to tolerate "the zone of the no-thing" in order for new ways of thinking to be allowed, created even, so that as therapists we become able to hear the other rather than our theories. His ideas perhaps point to the way psychotherapeutic theories have not generally been concerned with shared experience tending to either cause confusion about what is theory and what experience, as in the case of the unconscious, or splitting behaviour and experience focussing on only one or the other. Learning to practice as a psychotherapist must it seems be based on noticing how behaviour and experience interact but too often he sees experience as being denied and yet how else are we to permit the really crucial moments in practice which are for Laing (1967:34) "unpredictable, unique, unforgettable, always unrepeatable and often indescribable." One such moment arose for Boss (1963) which changed the way he viewed his work as a psychotherapist. A patient challenged his interpretations based on physiological understanding forcing him to begin to question his theoretical stance and take more notice of his own and the patient’s experiencing. In a sense he learned to rethink his psychoanalytic background recognising the split between natural science as factual, being based on what he calls "calculable objects" and a broader understanding of science as creating knowledge (Boss 1963:28). His Daseinanalysis, based on Heidegger’s analysis of Dasein calls for:

"...thinking [that] does not require us to accept a ready-made conceptual framework and to learn it by heart. On the contrary, analysis of Dasein urges all those who deal with human beings to start seeing and thinking from the beginning, so that they can remain with what they immediately perceive and do not get lost in 'scientific' abstractions, derivations, explanations and calculations estranged from the immediate reality of the given phenomena. It is of paramount importance to realize from the start fundamental difference which separates the natural sciences from the Daseinanalytic or existential science of man is to be found right here." (Boss 1963:29-30)
In summary, Boss (1963) and indeed Binswanger (1962) could be seen to be arguing for experience over explanation and furthermore an experience in the therapeutic encounter. In addition, it is useful to note that they both originally trained in psychoanalysis. The existential psychotherapist Yalom (1989) argues that reliance on schools of thought or technical systems is a way for the therapist to avoid those difficult experiences so ensuring certainty in the face of the unknowable other. In a more recent interview, he argued that: “Psychotherapy is a form of education and education is not something that can be crammed into a course” (Yalom 2004:10). Change or learning, whether related to the therapist’s or the patient’s, cannot be reduced simply to a training course or a course of treatment. Instead, this kind of learning from experience takes its course in its own time and for each of the above practitioners came about when they became experienced practitioners long after initial training. It seems that learning and development after a course of training has interesting effects where therapists start to think beyond their theoretical orientation or what they already know. A few studies begin to explore what happens during and after training.

A number of studies researched therapist development, during training, through supervisor or trainer perspectives and highlight learning in a number of ways. It can be viewed as change linked to reduction in anxiety and dependence on supervisors and becoming more independent and self confident (Reising & Daniels 1983) or more integrated and realistic (Loganbill, Hardy & Delworth 1982). Another view illustrated a process of shock, self doubt, and frustration moving more towards recognition of therapy as a process (Zaslav 1988). Studies exploring therapists’ perceptions of their development are limited. Roller (1984) claimed to be deriving stages of therapist development phenomenologically although he appeared to use his own observations as a trainer to validate Dreyfus and Dreyfus’ (1986) professional model of the transition from novice to expert. This model does highlight a shift from reliance on technique and supervisors towards independence and a more realistic acknowledgement of personal limitations. Sawatsky et al (1994) argued for more research from the student therapist’s perspective or ‘lived experience’. They asked students in the final stages of a counselling psychology, doctoral programme about significant experiences that contributed to their effectiveness as a therapist. The process they constructed, utilising grounded theory, was viewed as cyclical involving:
experiencing dissonance, responding to dissonance, relating to supervision and feeling empowered. Dissonance was recognised as essentially anxiety leading to cognitive and emotional discomfort. The anxiety associated with dissonance was seen as constructive rather than detrimental to learning and was seen to arise out of gaps in experience and knowledge. Sawatsky et al (1994) also proposed that learning and the dissonance associated with it do not end with training. One problem with this study was that it was often unclear whether the theoretical model was grounded in the data as the model was presented at the expense of experiential data.

Other studies explore learning after training. Skovolt and Ronnestat (1992) used semi-structured interviews of one hundred participants and a thematic analysis method to construct a model to describe the stages of development of therapists. The participants were practitioners who had completed training between one and forty years previously. Essentially they describe a number of factors that influence the developmental process as therapists move from reliance on external authority to reliance on internal authority. This is similar to Casement's (1985) idea of the internal supervisor where the therapist becomes more able to listen and learn from the patient and their unconscious communication. This learning process was found by Skovolt and Ronnestat (1992) to be long, slow and erratic, continuing long after training and influenced by clients, personal life, role models and increasing experience. Fenster et al (1992) attempted to study whether expert therapists of one psychoanalytic school were similar or different from those of another. They used a scale of therapists' beliefs to test whether seventy therapists (aged between 32-82 years) saw themselves as most, somewhat or less Sullivanian, Rogerian or Freudian and found that more experienced therapists functioned more like experienced therapists from other schools than less experienced therapists did compared to those of their own school of thought (Fenster et al 1992). It is not evident from this study why this should be so but this does indicate that some different kind of learning takes place following training.

Broadly speaking there appear to be two kinds of knowing recognisable within the psychotherapeutic literature, what Felman (1987) calls the objects of teaching compared to therapy as subject which seems more related to experiencing what is to be learned for oneself which paradoxically cannot be taught. Experiences which
create a space for this other kind of learning seem elusive within the literature although various research projects are beginning to suggest that a shift from reliance on theory as the object occurs after formal training but leaves a question as to whether or not this occurs during training. A number of contemporary writers address this other kind of learning experience, for example as a concern with therapeutic knowledge (Gordon 1999, Heaton 1991) although there is a paucity of research that attempts to address this.

4.3.2 Therapeutic Knowing and The Unknown

This section explores a discourse of other kinds of learning where ideas such as therapeutic knowledge, the soul, wisdom, the ineffable, and the uniqueness of each encounter abound (Bettelheim 2001, Eigen 1998, Gordon 1999, Heaton 1991, Hillman 1997, Kristeva 1995, Lomas 1999, Phillips 1997). In a sense these ideas form the subverted binary opposition to more demonstrable criteria and learning outcomes based on hours of practice, supervision, personal therapy and teacher contact hours, and learning based on knowledge and understanding, cognitive and practical skills as for example in the following: the registration criteria of BACP (2005) and training standards of EAP (1997) and UKCP (2005), BPS (2002, 2004). In essence a number of authors writing about psychotherapy call for a more philosophical and culturally responsive way of viewing practice, which in turn has implications for learning, not least that the therapist has to continually learn about new and unique cultures.

In his discussion of 'therapeia' as originating from the Greek meaning both 'service' or 'attendance' and 'medical treatment' or 'cure' Friedman (1994) argues that the second meaning has become dominant in such a way that experience becomes objectified and loses its contextual meaning being relocated as an end product to be achieved. As a result we can set goals, learn techniques and the rules of the game, but are not embodied in what we do and will tend, therefore, to replay what is known. Gordon (1999:86) takes up these ideas calling for "waiting or the art of unknowing" where preoccupation with goals of treatment is a way of closing down uncertainty compared to waiting without knowing. If we take the case of listening this kind of patience is crucial for creative wisdom that allows the unspeakable to be both spoken
and heard. Indeed it allows a space for a very different kind of listening that goes beyond what can be taught as technique, such as empathic listening, where the therapist learns to hear, reflect and paraphrase to demonstrate their empathy (Hough 1998, Tolan 2003). In this method listening becomes a key object rather than the subject which is the teacher. For example there are times when both client and therapist hear the importance of what has been said in a way that goes far beyond the literal words. In fact the actual words are not necessarily irrelevant but are experienced rather than heard or understood (Ogden 1999). Something happens outside the realm of the actual words or perhaps outside the known meaning. One area of responsibility for training could be considered to be the provision of experiences that enable us to be open to such listening, in many kinds of ways. Quinodoz (2003) attempts to show how words move us in unusual ways:

"A language that touches uses words that can be heard on different levels, words that act as a meeting point between different networks of associations, so that if one of these points is contacted vibrations are set up in a large number of spaces oriented in different directions..... A language touches when, in the course of conveying thoughts, it also reaches feelings, as well as the accompanying sensations and bodily manifestations." (Quinodoz 2003:193)

Learning how to speak in this way comes about through experiencing these kinds of words in training or perhaps personal therapy, the right words cannot be taught, they are not objects but rather come about through being able to create one’s own language in response to something the other has said. For the subject to become the teacher the learning needs to be based in experience so that the subject can touch us in palpable, although not demonstrable ways. According to Abrahams (1995) the poetic aspects of language are more able to convey something beyond the noematic aspect of language being concerned with the rhythmic, the phonetic and the semiotic and therefore the noetic. It is this mode of language which creates the kinds of pervasive resonance inferred above. According to Abrahams (1995) such poetic language cannot be modified because it is always born anew coming about through absence, the absence of the thesis, and being in time it resists synthesis and repetition. In that case perhaps one could argue that the poetic is not in relation to a known object, that already exists, and so resists being taught.

For Heaton (1991) therapeutic knowledge is concerned with the temporal spatial, cultural and non deterministic. Heaton (1991) further argues that developmental
models are metaphorical but appear scientific and hence become accepted as truth and are not questioned as embedded socio-cultural stories. This is similar to Habermas' (1987) argument that it is the continual questioning of the ways in which we conform to such stories that enable transformative learning. If such theories were recognised as stories their use as metaphors would still have a place to play in learning because of the way metaphors mediate imagination into something speakable, as well as illustrating something of our own position in relation to the socio-cultural world. Here again critical reflexivity in learning, as communicative and emancipatory, can enable such questioning of how and why we take for granted claims to theoretical or practical validity (Brookfield 2005). Similarly Heaton (1991) calls for ordinary common sense (as opposed to common opinion) drawing on Geertz's definition that common sense is "the ordinary ability to keep ourselves from being imposed upon by gross contradiction, palpable inconsistencies, and unmask'd impostures" (cited by Heaton 1991:77). To this end the theoretical blanketing of everything that a patient does needs to be replaced with being able to engage a reflective judgement that recognises, for example, that people say and do things that to them are ordinary and part of their culture rather than pathological. Temporal spatial awareness is an awareness of our own state in time and relationship to the other so that a new, rather than causal, response has potential. Heaton (1991) suggests that becoming identified with a particular theoretical orientation is itself neurotic because of the need to continually refer to the objects of theoretical knowing which deceives us into thinking we know. Thus self deception occurs when we cannot allow spontaneity of thought. He argues that self deception cannot be known at the time, only afterwards, so once we give up the search for an answer, as a desire to know, to a problem we are freed up, and anyway he says that "the person and their problem are one" (Heaton 1991: 78). Such a state requires a facing of the unknown in the sense of our own unknowing.

The splitting of the person from their difficulties is like stripping the text from the context or paring off the cultural layer from being. Similarly Kristeva (1995) eschews yet more classifications for what she sees as 'new maladies of the soul' arguing instead that we discover the unique maladies of each patient. Bettelheim (1982) argues that this split of the psyche happened through translation whereby Freud's ideas lost their associations with the soul instead being presented as theoretical and
scientific abstractions explaining the mind. In a sense Freud’s culturally allusive style was reduced to technical concepts which meant the resonance of multiple meanings and their effect on the reader, similar to Quinodoz (2003) ideas above, were lost. This split becomes problematic in learning about psychotherapy where the learner can too easily learn techniques and theory in order to emotionally distance themselves from the other. Bettelheim (1982) points out, however, that the ‘soul’ in Freud’s thought is not religious or mystical but concerned with what we are passionate about whilst alive. There is no easy method for how therapists can learn in this way but a good starting point might be a concern with what students are interested in, what moves them, what they are passionate about. Another might be to allow space for an allusive kind of learning opened up by not claiming we know.

A number of authors recognise the mystical, ineffable nature of psychotherapeutic practice and the need for the ability to respond in ways that it is very difficult to specify within the confines of language, which cannot be planned and seems to raise the issue of intuition (Abrahams 1995, Bollas 1987, 1999, Eigen 1998, Lomas 1999, Phillips 1997). Lomas (1999:78) in particular calls for an ability to be spontaneous and although this always runs the risk of being thoughtless it also has the potential to allow an intuitive kind of thought “when uninhibited our minds can think very quickly: we call this faculty ‘intuition’; many elements, conscious and unconscious, can be processed in a flash.” He goes on to relate this to experience as the mediator between conceptual abilities and interaction with the world (Lomas 1999). Phillips (1997) also argues for not reading theories too literally but instead like a story or poem and indeed as he says of his writing “I’m not interested in having theories. I’m interested in making sentences.” For Phillips (1997) this is more to do with something having resonance where the writer is as much disturbed by what he writes as his readers by what they read. In essence then learning about the unknown in psychotherapy is concerned with having a space to think the unthinkable, speak the unspeakable which pertains to both students and their teachers, the experience cannot be one way. Learning about the unknown is a relational experience.
4.4 Conclusions

In reviewing some literature that considers the unknown of the unknown, as implicated through aspects of learning that address culture, experience and being, a number of problems with the concept of learning about the unknown have arisen. These issues have important implications for learning to be a psychotherapist. From whichever perspective one views learning it cannot be understood directly and so is inferred by what is learned in certain kinds of situations resulting in some kind of change (Cronbach 1977, Knowles 1990). What is most hidden from us, as in our cultural heritage, (Habermas 1987, Brookfield 2005) is also what may be most present through our being and yet remains unknown. Polanyi’s (1966) ideas about tacit knowledge both acknowledge the known of the unknown, as something known but not speakable and the unknown of the unknown as embodied and influencing action in unknown ways.

Tacit knowing (Polanyi 1966, 1969) continues the theme that there are always aspects of learning that are beyond knowing being inextricably bound up with being. Hence the ways in which being influences how we come to know and what we choose to attend to are also largely unknown, and some aspects unknowable. Tacit knowing, in revealing how something is acquired through bodily experience of dwelling in situations, is thus more related to learning that is not intentional. This is not to say that detailed description, or knowing, is not important but eventually a deeper understanding goes beyond that so that learning is not what we know demonstrated by and how we speak or write of it but rather how we become able to speak from our unknowing.

In the field of psychotherapy Rogers (1986 in Kirschenbaum and Henderson 1990) recognised the importance of being able to speak from our unknowing because of the way we then also embody our knowing through experiencing such as interaction with the other. In a sense unknowing enables the therapist to be changed by their experience of a situation. One problematic here is that explanations of experience appear to be unstable and point to how something of our experience is not reducible to analysis because it is so contextualised or caught up with other experiences and any explanation inevitably changes the experience (Boud 1993). The ideas of Brew
(1993:97) where unknowing requires unlearning and the need to face our ignorance especially when we think we know points to experiences where we learn to question ourselves again and again with no let up. Reflective learning is seen as helpful because it is viewed as a process of learning to learn to keep looking from each experience so that learning to learn from experience becomes more important than the object of learning or the facts of the case. Transformative or emancipatory learning (eg Mezirow 1981) however puts the relational back into learning from experience in challenging us to question our cultural assumptions possible only if we are willing to learn through facing the unknown other.

Within the field of psychotherapy Felman (1987) has identified a dichotomy in psychotherapeutic knowledge present from the Freudian beginning and taken up by Lacan. On the one hand psychotherapy has generated a growing body of literature and yet learning to be a psychotherapist requires one to learn to forget what we know and experience our own unknowing. The body of literature could easily be viewed as the known objects of learning as opposed to ideas about the subject as teacher, as unknown other. Unknowing in learning about psychotherapy brings with it a discourse associated with suffering as permitting and tolerating the anxiety of our uncertainty. In learning about the unknown instead of breaking knowledge down into clear categories of what is to be taught in order to sustain the dominant discourse or theoretical school, can we permit the known to fall apart by questioning inconsistencies and contradictions within texts. The humanistic and existential movement has implicated the relational and the need to permit the unpredictable, irreducible other to disturb such discourses of the known (eg Laing 1967, 1995, Rogers 1951, 1961). Learning about the unknown requires a time and space rather than a prescribed course and learning to learn from each unique case. In dropping the desire to know we may be more open to learning in each unique situation creating words anew that resonate in unknown ways, where words move us beyond thought. How can learning about psychotherapy reveal, or at least not conceal these issues, from psychotherapy students? Some tentative suggestions are that learning about the unknown is not an object to be taught but experience in which to dwell, where we start with the interests and passions of our students, where theory is read as metaphor and where we can permit disturbance. We need to be both disturbed and disturbing.
5. RESEARCHING LEARNING ABOUT THE UNKNOWN WHILST TRAINING TO BE A PSYCHOTHERAPIST

5.1 Introduction

The exemplar for undertaking exploration of the unknown is connected with the acquisition of therapeutic knowledge hence this chapter will consider the implications of the research question (how do psychotherapists learn about the unknown?) for methodology. According to Silverman (2000) methodology is concerned with how to obtain information that will enable the research question or questions to be answered or explored. Van Maanen (1989:10) explains the need, therefore, to identify what he calls a 'temporal and spatial domain of the social world' so that the researcher can chart the terrain to be researched, whilst still recognising that 'the map is not the territory'. In fact this map will have undergone an essentially interpretive act in its definition, thus the researcher is always implicated in the formation of the field of study. De Groot (1983) has taken this argument even further suggesting that all elements of a research project from question formulation to data analysis are inevitably informed by the researcher’s personal experience, values and perceptions. Hence this chapter will clarify how the terrain for research (as developed through chapters two to four) is to be researched and why such decisions were made based on epistemological and ontological as well as methodological issues. Consideration of where the researchers own field of experience is implicated in the creation and investigation of the domain was opened up in chapter two.

In chapters three and four, having explored various ways of thinking about the unknown, learning about the unknown and learning about the unknown in psychotherapy training a number of factors about the very nature of the unknown (that is as unknown) can be seen to have implications for research methodology. These factors are connected to the way the unknown is understood as a shifting from the known to the unknown, as what can become known and as what remains unknown. Consequently the methodology will need to consider how to investigate the space between knowing and unknowing (in either direction) and the effects of the unknown that cannot be known but can be shown to destabilise or subvert the known. Moreover the unknown is also seen as a range of phenomena that are essentially
Furthermore it was argued, in chapters three and four, that the ways in which aspects of the unknown were shown to be revealed was through methods that: begin with the known, reduce anxiety enough so that the unknown is not prevented from putting in an appearance and allow the unknown to come towards us as it cannot be found by direct glancing towards. Earlier chapters have in essence considered ways in which we are subject to the unknown as other or otherwise which can be seen via the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty (1962) who suggests that Phenomenology has a concern with what lies on the hither side from the point of view of intersubjective experience. This chapter will also consider how a phenomenological approach to research could allow the unspoken to be spoken and enable the researcher to engage with the participants and their experiencing as well as their experiencing in relation to the researcher. Hence can we hear the other whilst being subject too? The main approach to these issues evolved out of Hollway and Jefferson’s (2000) work on the use of free association although ideas about reverie (Bion 1962, 1970, Ogden 1997) helped clarify more about the states of mind of and relationship between researcher and researched, being less concerned with technique and more with negative capability. In fact a distinction between technique and what is learned through one’s very being also raises questions about how to research that which lies beyond technical knowledge, something Schon (1992) defines as professional artistry.

Additionally Silverman (2000) suggests clarifying the extent to which pre defined methods and measures will be used (defined by Miles and Huberman 1984 as ‘prior instrumentation’). In this study the pre defined method to be utilised is Giorgi’s (1975, 1985) phenomenological method which was seen in previous research (Cayne 1998) to provide a starting point for phenomenological research when combined with Becker’s (1992) ideas about the importance of individual life worlds compared to psychological language and theorising. Whilst this method was found to clearly explicate a method for data analysis and claimed to have processes in common with Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology (Kvale 1996) it was less helpful in deciding on the processes involved in data collection and did not seem to take into consideration the relational aspects of research (Cayne & Loewenthal 2004). This earlier research has also led to questions about how existing phenomenological methods such as Giorgi’s (1985) method can help or hinder the explication of unknown forces at play in research whilst addressing the process of the phenomenological reduction. The
implications of such difficulties will also be considered for the development of methodology in this project.

The above issues will be considered through four main areas involved in deciding how to gain information that will address the research question. Firstly the question of the relevance of qualitative methodology in describing rather than quantifying the kinds of experience that will permit the unknown as unexpected phenomena to emerge; Secondly implications of the nature of the unknown particularly in terms of the production of anxiety and the role of free association and reverie in allowing the unspeakable to be spoken by a process of beginning from the known, waiting for something to come towards us, as we speak to the other thus enabling something of intersubjective experience to influence the gathering of data and potentially the data analysis too. Reverie in particular is seen as a way of operationalising the process of communication and will be explicated here in order to then develop it as part of a phenomenological method. This discussion will include three main areas of focus, as identified in chapter three: the unknown as a shift from the known to the unknown as well as the unknown as eventually knowable and the problematic of the unknown as unknowable; beyond to the relational and; the technical rational compared to ontology and artistry.

Thirdly the strengths and limitations of existing phenomenological research methods, in particular that of Giorgi (1975,1985) including the extent to which this method can be seen to be apposite with Merleau-Ponty's (1962) phenomenology which is essentially concerned with investigating the unknown and associated problems. Three main areas will be considered: the extent to which such methods offer guidance for data collection; comparison of individual life worlds/experience compared to psychological language in data analysis and; the problem of the phenomenological reduction when viewed from the perspective of a research method that needs to allow awaiting.

Finally as methodology also address practical questions about the methods for data collection and analysis as well as selection of participants to be involved (Kvale (1996) the chosen research method and its adaptations will be explicited in order to show how it will guide the intended data collection, the selection of participants and
related ethical issues and data analysis. Such operational issues are also referred to as the research design.

5.2 The Qualitative Methodological Paradigm

As a principle aim of this project is the development of a methodology to explore the unknown, which by its very nature is not known in any direct way, the main approach is exploratory rather than explanatory. Exploration is more appropriate where the research question is open (Silverman 2000) and when the research is particularly concerned with "recognising new dimensions" and "realising new insights" compared to hypothesis-testing, research where such new understandings are seen as problematic (Kvale 1996:100). Following on from chapter three the importance of creating an opening rather than seeking to explain the world is the intention here. Additionally, as was shown in chapter four there are complex phenomena associated with learning about practice that cannot be delineated as having an invariant and known set of practices and experiences. Schon (1992 & 1990) attempts to show the quality of indeterminacy in practice based disciplines which do not, therefore, lend themselves to teaching, learning and researching within a technical rational or positivist epistemology. Thus a research project that is concerned with exploration of new possibilities set within "indeterminate zones of practice" (Schon 1992) must select a methodological paradigm that can cope with what Van Maanen (1983:250) calls "the messy, disordered and difficult to pin down". He suggests that qualitative methodology can more ably reflect the chaos and incongruity of the social world because "unexpected variance" is actually sought (Van Maanen 1983). In other words this project is not attempting to tread well worn paths of repetition but is concerned with truth seen from Badiou's (2002) position when something actually interrupts repetition. Here truth is seen as arising out of something new but is ever in flux.

Giorgi (1985) supports the relevance of a qualitative research paradigm with a descriptive perspective within the discipline of psychology because it offers different kinds of insight that also run parallel with an essentially descriptive praxis. He questions why such descriptive or 'raw data' in research is not valued as highly as questionnaires or surveys, which still rely on language use, when practice still largely
relies on the way people speak of their experiences. Van Maanen’s (1983) view of 
the qualitative paradigm is a particularly apposite one in relation to the unknown as he 
is able to highlight a number of characteristics which help to map out what can be 
researched in this way. Firstly he highlights the importance of avoiding technical 
procedures that only succeed in distancing the researcher from what is being 
researched when the researcher’s experience might be of help in explicating what is 
discovered. Secondly the concern with describing social processes rather than social 
structures carries along with it the need to describe the social context especially as 
seen from the frame of reference of the participants. Thirdly understanding of these 
contextual issues tends to come from “direct, firsthand, and more or less intimate 
knowledge of a research setting” (Van Maanen 1983:10). What recognition of these 
aspects of qualitative research does is to begin to explain the importance of the 
combination of the participants and the researcher’s experience in exploring (whether 
gathering or analysing) data that are “symbolic, contextually embedded, cryptic, and 
reflexive.....” (p10). Here is the relational in terms of the frame of reference of the 
participants in relation to the experience of the researcher, and vice versa, and hence a 
question of how qualitative research methods might account for both these 
experiencing subjects.

Within the qualitative paradigm the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty (1962, 1964) is 
seen as a phenomenology of relations that neither assimilates nor rejects the other, but 
holds a tension between. This between leads to the unknown by being focussed on the 
possibility of experience through a process of opening up the space between rather 
than concocting a story to fit a particular epistemology. The experience becomes the 
evidence although according to Laing (1967:5) it is not possible to separate the 
other’s experience from my experience only to recognise “the relation between my 
experience of you and your experience of me”. However:

“Since your and their experience is invisible to me as mine is to you and them, I seek to make 
evident to the others, through their experience of my behaviour, what I infer of your 
experience, through my experience of your behaviour. This is the crux of social 
phenomenology.” (Laing 1967:5)

It is argued that this interexperience is also at the heart of phenomenology and one 
reason why phenomenology is the main qualitative approach chosen for this project. 
The phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty (1962, 1963) is especially appropriate because
of its concern with intersubjectivity as the meeting point between experiences. Phenomenology also arises from philosophy as a way of describing experience which draws on description in a different way to science. Heaton (2000) argues that in science description is used to explain whereas Wittgenstein pointed to description as a way of opening to view.

Whilst other qualitative approaches such as heuristics or grounded theory may be considered to be phenomenological (Moustakas 1994) they were not considered appropriate in this project. One reason for this is that they were considered unable to address the relational. Heuristic research, for example, uses the experiences of participants to check out and illuminate the personal experience of the researcher (Moustakas 1994). Whilst heuristic research does require the researcher to be clear about their own investment in the research it could be seen as problematic because the experiences of researcher and researched become incorporated into a creative synthesis. This is quite different to opening up the relationship between and with it the potential for paradox, contradiction and difference. For similar reasons grounded theory was also seen as problematic. Whilst grounded theory draws on participants' experience it then attempts to turn the experiences into theory by studying the interrelationship between different elements of experience (Glaser & Strauss 1967). The prior ideas and experience of the researcher are seen as data in the early inductive stages of grounded theory research and as they inform understanding of the issue under study there is no attempt at bracketing as in phenomenological research (Baker et al 1992). Again the meeting point between the researcher and the participants experience is not seen as itself a focus of the research. Within phenomenology the issue of the researcher's experience in relation to the experience of the participants' can become polarised between transcendental (Husserl 1929) and hermeneutic (Heidegger 1962) phenomenology although Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology seems also to require a meeting point between transcendental phenomenology and hermeneutic phenomenology which will be considered in part 5.3.1 after the implications of the unknown for research methodology have been explicated.
5.3 The Nature of the Unknown and Implications for Research Methodology

The discussion in previous chapters has demonstrated the ways in which other writers have considered the unknown and the approach has been to recognise ways of enabling the unknown to appear rather than attempting to define or locate it. Three major ways of defining the unknown without actually defining it have emerged: firstly the unknown as a shift from the known to the unknown secondly, the unknown as not yet known and secondly the unknown as unknowable. The first and second ways of viewing the unknown suggest that something may become known but the events between knowing and unknowing, unknowing and knowing lead to a range of phenomena associated with anxiety and yet this transitional space is also the birth place of creativity. The third way of viewing the unknown as unknowable has an additional area for investigation as an absence that destabilises that which is present or known. Thus in order for the research question to be explored the problematic of anxiety associated with these three elements of the unknown will need to be considered.

Hollway and Jefferson (2000: 26) highlight the difficulty of research with human subjects who are essentially "meaning-making and defended subjects" who filter what is being asked through differing frames of reference, whose discourses are adopted for self protection, who may not understand their experiences and who hide some experiences and behaviours due to unconscious processes. They further ascribe such defended behaviours to Klein's ideas about anxiety being a fundamental characteristic of human experience initially identified by Freud as resulting from the conflicted nature of the human psyche and later through Klein's ideas about the unbearable tensions created from holding two opposing points of view especially related to good and bad aspects of the self (Hollway and Jefferson 2000). Such underlying anxiety can also be seen to be intensified when one reaches some kind of limit in knowing conceptualised for example as a transitional space (Winnicott 1990) as well as when some repressed experience (an unknown something) is in danger of breaking through to consciousness (Malan 2001). All these ideas are posited on conceptualisation of the unknown as unconscious and as was discussed in chapter three this is just a partial way of theorising about one aspect of unknown experience, something supported by Stanton (1997). The potential for exploring the experience of
the unknown rather than theoretical understandings is another focus of this research although the approach to the research subjects’ theoretical leanings will need to be considered. At this stage of researching the unknown the differences between theoretical approaches is of less concern than research participants’ experience of learning about the unknown. The question of who is to be interviewed and their stage of development as a psychotherapist is considered in 5.4.2 after the term psychotherapist has been operationalised.

Within the psychoanalytic literature the way we react to the unknown by theorising is apparent. Ferenczi (Stanton 1991) suggested that theorising begins in childhood as a way of attempting to explain the sexual behaviours of adults and Stanton takes this further advocating that such theorizing continues into adulthood and is the basis for all our attempts to understand the world (1997). Drawing on Ferenczi’s (Stanton 1991) ideas this theorising could also be argued as the result of often uncertain and confusing circumstances in which theorising helped to reduce the anxiety of unknowing. Laplanche (1999) also sees such theorising as a way of translating-detranslating the unknown or enigmatic message of the other which is experienced as disturbing because it is both unknown and unknown to both and invasive. In this case thinking could then be seen to be aroused by experiences that have a sexual trace, yet are unknown and disturbing leading to continual translation-detranslation or perhaps explanation in order to alleviate the tension of unknowing.

In a different vein the ideas of Bion (1962, 1970) presented in chapter three also began to highlight some problems of theorising as a way of knowing or thinking that arises similarly to psychotic type limitations. Additionally Miller (1990: 23) contends that some aspects of: “psychology and research methodology have come to resemble neurosis in the deterministic fixation on cause and effect explanations.” These approaches lead to the treatment of the world of others as “inanimate objects” where evacuation of beta elements gains primacy over alpha functioning and moreover Bion (1962:14) likens such scientific approaches to this pathological mode of experiencing stating:

"The inability of even the most advanced human beings to make use of their thoughts, because the capacity to think is the most rudimentary in all of us, means that the field of investigation, all investigation being ultimately scientific, is limited, by human inadequacy, to those phenomena that have the characteristics of the inanimate. We assume that the
psychotic limitation is due to an illness: but that of the scientist is not. Investigation of the assumption illuminates disease on the one hand and scientific method on the other. It appears that our rudimentary equipment for 'thinking' thoughts is adequate when the problems are associated with the inanimate, but not when the object for investigation is the phenomenon of life itself. Confronted with the complexities of the human mind the analyst must be circumspect in following even accepted scientific method; its weakness may be closer to the weakness of psychotic thinking than superficial scrutiny would admit.

In other words it is easier to reduce others to something inorganic and get rid of experiences that do not fit with that world view. Whilst this may reduce anxiety it also closes down creative thought and therefore the minimising of anxiety is not necessarily required. It seemed that interviewing more experienced practitioners, who had been able to recognise and tolerate the effects of their own anxiety and need to theorise, would be appropriate.

The above ideas are important in this study where the concern is with a process of living called learning which lead to questions about the place of theorising and scientific methods in research methodology. These questions will continue to be addressed with regard to Giorgi's (1985) phenomenological method in section 5.4 and 5.5 of this chapter. At this stage the focus will remain with the influence of anxiety not just in the research participants but in the researcher which can lead to a cause and effect methodology rather than sustaining a concern with the ontological. Another view of anxiety which is that of existential anxiety is seen as a phenomenon underlying all other human experience, including neurotic anxiety, and moreover neurotic anxiety can be viewed as arising because the individual has not faced or accepted ontological anxiety (May 1983). May also points out how the ontological nature of anxiety can get lost in psychoanalytic theorising as psychopathology, rather than as ontological truth, although he suggests Freud meant this too (May 1983). May defined anxiety thus:

"Anxiety is the subjective state of the individual's becoming aware that his existence can become destroyed, that he can lose himself and his world and that he can become 'nothing.'" (May 1983:109-110)

Existential anxiety could thus be argued to become more noticeable when we are faced with any unknown experience. Blanchot (1993:35) argues, for example, that the unknown reminds us of our ultimate fate as finite beings whereas knowledge and the naming that runs alongside are an attempt to capture a moment, to present the
absence through language "but speaking precisely in the name of this nothingness that dissolves all things" in such a way as to sanitise the reminder of death. Further:

"And how could we not be led to claim that what is lost in this idealising denaturation is obscurity itself, and the dark reality of this indescribable event-turned by us, thanks to an astonishing subterfuge, into a means of living and a power of thought? We again find ourselves, therefore, before what must be called 'the great refusal,' the refusal to stop beside the enigma that is the strangeness of this singular end." (Blanchot 1993:35)

If as was argued in chapter three, as well as above, any attempt to address the unknown may set up a resonance not just with neurotic anxiety but also with existential anxiety as a reminder of death which needs consideration when speaking of the unknown with research subjects.

As a psychotherapeutic research method, free association raises interesting questions about how to reduce attempts to overcome or avoid anxiety (Hollway and Jefferson 2000) relevant here where the impact of the unknown in research and learning from experience is seen to generate anxiety, leading to difficulties in speaking of experience. It has also been argued in chapter three that free association can be likened to the phenomenological imperative of attending to experiences without attempting to fit them within a theory, at least initially. For Bion (1970) the state of mind that is able to wait without reaching for the solution or understanding is reverie. By this stage free association and reverie seem to describe something similar, indeed Ogden points out a relationship between Freud's 'evenly suspended attention' and Bion's 'absence of memory and desire' (Ogden 1997:133). In fact both reverie and free association seem to have something in common with the phenomenological approach of attending to what is given without analysis or theoretical explanation. Most importantly patience and awaiting the possible could be seen as waiting for something to arrive although both Gordon (2000) and Bion (1970) call for patience that can just wait 'without irritable reaching after fact and reason' (Bion 1970:124).

There is a major difficulty with free association that requires further development through the work of Hollway and Jefferson (2000). In fact free association could be seen to generate more anxiety than what is already present because it involves a continual deferring of the gratification resulting from the kind of thinking related to theorising. Ogden (1997) shows how complex free association and reverie are by
pointing out the need to value the other’s privacy and right to want to keep things to his or her self in balance to verbal communication. This is in turn opens up the need to differentiate between a number of kinds of experiencing namely: that which the patient does not yet want to speak, things they perhaps never will want to speak, what they cannot yet speak but what they hope the therapist may help them find the words for and things the patient wants to say and does. Added to this are the experiences communicated by non verbal means too. According to Ogden (1997) it is, however, crucial that one learns to differentiate between these differing kinds of experience. What can also be seen here is how these experiences parallel differing views of the unknown already outlined as that which is not yet known, as that which never will be known and yet continues to communicate something and that which is known, can be spoken but yet might lead elsewhere too. Distinguishing between these different kinds of experience will also become important activities for the researcher both during data collection and analysis.

To some extent Freud (1923) showed how the therapist needs to be the one to begin surrendering to their own unconscious (explicated in this case as unknowing) activity and Bion (1970) in fact argues that it is the therapist’s (and here therefore it is argued the researcher’s) responsibility to hold and contain the resulting modes of evading anxiety (outlined in chapter 3) and thus the researcher needs to engage in the act of reverie, even though the other may not be able to. The researcher will also need to remain alive to differing kinds of unknown experience in order to engage with participants in appropriate ways. Free association and reverie are not so much modes of overcoming anxiety but rather ways of revealing where anxiety appears (Freud 1923). Various phenomena which occur change the nature of the associating, such as coming to a standstill, floundering or the breaking down of ordinary language, (Kris 1996) and indicate something unknown is happening outside the story and destabilising its continuity. Bollas (2002) also points out the importance of being willing to play ‘trivial pursuit’ or attend to what seems most commonplace, or inconsequential in what the subject is saying, thus not attributing importance to one thing over another. According to Kris (1996) ‘a variety of interferences and diversions’ occur although he sees the prime function of free association as learning to master such interruptions and enabling continuity of thought. In this project, however, there is also interest in the very moments of discontinuity or disjuncture
which may be when the subject arrives at a moment of unknowing, or when he or she can no longer have mastery over their experiencing. These moments may be recognised at the time (during data collection) as something new unfolding (something unknown becoming known) or may also only be realised later, for example during data analysis (the destabilising effects of that which remained unknown during the interviews). Thus both the saying, for example in interviews and the reading of what was said, for example via interview transcripts will contribute to understanding the unknown.

Consideration of the saying and the said, also influences the research method, and will be addressed in 5.3.1. Whilst the above aspects of free association are helpful it is mainly the ideas associated with reverie that will become a major process in the research methods. Although there is seen to be overlap between free association and reverie, the term reverie will now be used because it addresses more explicitly the relational. Whilst the above view of reverie could be seen to take a predominantly psychoanalytic stance reverie has already been considered, in chapter three, to open up new possibilities through a critique of cause and effect or grand theories that return everything to what was originally posited, for example the unconscious. Reverie, originating from the old French of the fourteenth century has, however, a much more generalised sense as a state of abstracted musing, daydreaming, and wandering (Hoad 1996). This was not a term invented for psychoanalysis but rather borrowed because of Bion’s concern on two counts. Firstly, reverie could be seen to be integral to the concern with the relational and a move away from conventional psychoanalytic concerns with the intrapsychic, conceptualised as unconscious phantasies (Tourney Souter 1998). The relevance to this project is that whilst reverie has been essentially acknowledged via the psychoanalytic literature it is not intended to become a tool for psychoanalysis in this project but rather a vehicle for communication and thought in the meeting between researcher and participants both in the saying (for example interviews) and in analysing the said (data analysis). In fact Bachelard (1960) views reverie as a way to phenomenology.

Secondly reverie or daydreaming has already been argued as questioning traditional epistemology that sees thinking as preceding thought. Likewise Bachelard made an epistemological shift “from the universe of reason and science to that of imagination
and poetry" (Gilson 1994) and reverie became his method for a phenomenological exploration (Bachelard 1994). Reverie with its concern with imagination, dreaming and the poetic is not concerned with representing being but accomplishing it as a creative act, a birth, an awakening. If "The poetic image places us at the origin of the speaking being" (Bachelard 1994: xxiii) then reverie could be seen to be the state of being for a beginning, the plight that allows us to be stirred.

"Through this reverberation, by going immediately beyond all psychology or psychoanalysis, we feel poetic power rising naively within us. After the original reverberation, we are able to experience resonances, sentimental repercussions, reminders of our past. But the image has touched the depths before it stirs the surface. And this is true of a simple experience of reading. The image offered us by reading the poem now becomes really our own. It takes root in us. It has been given by another, but we begin to have the impression we created it. It becomes a new being in our language, expressing us by making us what it expresses; in other words, it is at once a becoming of expression, and a becoming of our being. Here expression creates being." (Bachelard 1994: xxiii)

Reverie can be seen to be concerned with imagination and the poetic and as identified in chapter four the poetic resists positing or as Abrahams says (1995: 43) "poetic signification admits no correlative intentional object." In this he further argues that scientific signification attempts a logical duplication whereas the poetic is a-logical and intuitive and catches more of the noetic aspects of a phenomenon (Abrahams 1995). Again the links between the primacy of the semiotic over the symbolic, la parole over la langue and the noetic over the noematic emerge in phenomenology being concerned as they are with meaning. As Abrahams (1995) asserts:

"since poetry as such-that is, not as a psychological or sociological phenomenon-falls within the domain of noesis, it must be directly accessible to the pre-eminent science of noetic acts and attitudes: phenomenology." (Abrahams 1995:45)

The two areas identified above will now be further developed. These are: Firstly the implications of the relational, as an ethical imperative, for an exploration of the unknown through reverie and; Secondly reverie also raises further questions about the nature of science and therefore epistemology, so consideration will then be given to a discussion of the difference between epistemology as the technical rational compared to an epistemology of artistry.
5.3.1 The relational

Bion's (1994) ideas about reverie which are less concerned with constituting the unknown within the framework of unconsciousness compared to free association, open up the importance of relatedness between the therapist's and the patient's associations and in this project between researcher and researched. Ogden (1997) begins to highlight how reverie is not, therefore, a technique done to the patient (or the interviewee) but an intersubjective experience, the one being subject to the other. It is therefore also a way of operationalising (without reducing being to the technical) the communication and thinking processes involved in the research method and various ways of viewing the relational therefore emerge for further debate. Whilst it is acknowledged that the relational has implications throughout the research process, in this project it is more easily seen to emerge at two key moments: firstly during the interview process which could be deemed as the time of saying and secondly during the data analysis which could be deemed as an analysis of the said. The implications of the ideas of Levinas (Hand 1989), as well as continuing in relation to the phenomenological method as analysis of the said (discussed in section 5.4), for epistemology, ontology and methodology will now be considered. Alongside this discussion there will be continuing development of reverie as part of the research method and the phenomenological concern with the relationship between transcendental and hermeneutic phenomenology.

Levinas' concern is with ethical relationship which questions how the search for understanding can sit alongside otherness: 'The labour of thought wins out over the otherness of things and men.' (Levinas 1984 in Hand 1989:78). These words are a critique of our need to understand others which gets in the way of acceptance of otherness and in the end leads to a reduction of the other's experience to a narrative that claims to explain a phenomenon. In other words as researchers we incorporate various experiences in order to tell our (own) story. Incorporation here means assimilating experiences as though they were one body and yet at the same time results in a disembodying of that experience, it becomes incorporeal and unreal. In other words if the bodily framework becomes separated out the context is also lost. It is not too extreme to say that this is a struggle between life and death or perhaps birth and death where the life between becomes lost. Perhaps what is most deathly for
Levinas (1984) is the incorporation of the other and in this project, for example, a heuristic approach has already been discounted because of the possibility of incorporating the research subjects' stories into the researcher's as well as grounded theory which could be viewed as the incorporation of experience into the researcher's story presented as a theory.

In this phenomenological project these difficulties do not disappear though. The researcher has already, through the literature, identified three ways of viewing the unknown which could already become a theory to be proved or disproved. Whilst these ways of viewing the unknown may emerge through research subjects' speaking of their experience, reverie is also seen as a way of remaining open to something else, something other. The work of Bion can be viewed as a journey involving remaining constantly open to the new and challenging dogma (Eigen 1998, Grotstein 1995). Bion's transformative 'O' represents the unknown which may or may not remain unknowable (Eigen 1998) but this is not to define the unknown rather to highlight that something of our very being is unknowable, always otherwise. What is other or otherwise can be deathly to self and other but also has the potential for the birth of new thought.

Levinas' (1997) thought raises associated epistemological questions because he saw knowledge as arising out of ethical relationships but as Clegg and Slife (2005) argue this is not ruled by the need to begin and end with proving what is posited, especially when what is posited stems from the researcher's own interest and position. No agreement needs to be achieved. In a sense the other is the mysterious, the unknown, the unknowable and yet paradoxically it is out of encounter, as a non incorporating relationship, with the other that truth becomes possible (Clegg and Slife 2005). It is this kind of encounter or ethical relationship that calls for an ethical epistemology and although this includes guiding principles it does not lead to a methodology that travels well worn, already known paths. For Levinas (1984) the ethical relationship guides us to responsibility to the other in a way that cannot be pre ordained, it is not intentional. Ethics then precedes ontology and one cannot make decisions about being or how to be in a given situation (such as an interview) one has to wait and see. Then the face of the other calls to us, but in calling requires a response that is not already posited on ontology or any other theory, known or unknown.
Levinas' (1997, 1998) thought is also a resistance of totalising claims and the carving of being into categories, such as significant statements (Colaizzi 1978) or units of meaning (Giorgi 1985) which can never capture what he calls "the hither side of identity" and which Clegg and Slife (2005) argue is nevertheless not beyond experience or knowing. In fact they argue that thematising and reduction are necessary because we cannot escape our ontological position but what Levinas is arguing for is that such categorisation does not become enshrined in certainty (1997).

A possible critique of Levinasian ethics is that in seeing ethics as preceding ontology he could be viewed as attempting to position himself on the hither side of existence, an impossibility for a being who has an essentially embodied existence. In turn ethics then fails to address the tension (or relationship) between being in and of the world and what lies on the hither side, for example, the non intentional as identified by Levinas (Hand 1989). We are always restricted by our being so perhaps it is the ways in which being limits our investigations that requires attention. Thus it is still possible to show how temporary such thematic organisation is even when it seemingly becomes fixed as the said. The ambiguous nature of the saying still needs to be retained in the said (as the written word) and this is akin to what is just, that "justice requires contemporaneousness of representation" (Levinas 1997:157). This seems akin to the idea of revealing how the written presentation of data is shown to be always in time and any associated knowing is only ever provisional and incomplete. Thus the translation of the meeting between researcher and research participants needs to be presented in such a way as to reveal rather than conceal the fluidity of the data.

As phenomenology has been the position taken up from the beginning, the implications of such an ethical epistemology for phenomenology as methodology need further thought. (The implications for method as data collection will be considered in part 5.5.) The origins of Levinas' thought are within phenomenology beginning with Husserl's thought but also moving into Heidegger's and beyond questioning the very basis of each, not least intentionality (Cohen 1998). Thus Levinas' thought could be seen to be phenomenological and post phenomenological as he moves beyond hermeneutics which could itself be seen as a reaction to and development of transcendental phenomenology. Merleau-Ponty (1962) calls for the
kind of relationship where meaning emerges between differing world views at the same time recognizing the way historicity informs consciousness. In similar vein Warren (2005) proposes an Ethical-Hermeneutics based on the ideas between Heidegger's and Gadamer's hermeneutics and Levinas' ethics, between understanding (hermeneutics) and separation (ethics) which occurs at the pre ontological level. He argues, however, that whilst the ethical is pre ontological revealed at the time of the saying, the language of saying relates to the said which is ontological and this shift between pre ontological and ontological infers a relationship between them (Warren 2005). In fact the pre ontological of the saying emerges through the ontological of the said according to Levinas (1969). Hence ethical relating breaks through the hermeneutic relating as involving our own historicity brought to bear in relationship with the other. The pre ontological as preceding any intentional act is non intentional. Can the intentional, ontological and ethics be separated or do they lean on each other and if so how does one create this separation which involves "the separated being maintains itself in existence all by itself" (Levinas 1969:58)? Is separation an act of epoche and does the parenthesising of our own pre conceptions enable the ethical to break through or is it when we notice how our own historicity is called into question through disruption that the ethical breaks through or are both possibilities? Either way ethical discourse involves a break through at the time of the saying and whilst such a discourse is otherwise than either the ontological or the intentional we cannot escape the problems of existence and consciousness. Rather they need to be held in tension to the unknown other so that we stand a chance of recognising when the other is reduced to our own understanding, for example after the saying, at the time of examining the said. The said as the text can still reveal the saying.

In essence it is argued that the relational as ethical cannot occur outside the historicity of ontology or the ontological in intentionality and we cannot position ourselves in the pre ontological, non intentional. At best the conditions for an ethical methodology arise through a meeting between the knowing of being and consciousness, and the unknown other who brings the potential for disruption to our habitual ways of being.
5.3.2 The technical rational compared to the artistic

Given that an important aspect of this project is a concern with knowledge within the field of psychotherapy, albeit the unknown, questions of what kinds of knowledge are most suited to researching learning about psychotherapy, an essentially practice based discipline, need to be considered. Generally there are three main approaches to organising the beliefs underpinning knowledge, rational which seeks to provide logical arguments aimed at illustrating the truth of beliefs, empirical which aims to provide demonstrable evidence to support beliefs and pragmatic which is based on experiment through experience in a given situation (Jarvis 1999, Morton 2003). Epistemology is concerned with how we decide whether a belief is true or false so that we can base decisions on more adequate knowledge or to put it another way epistemology is concerned with the grounds on which knowledge is legitimated. Rationalism and empiricism attempt to develop methods in order to provide more logical or tangible ways of generating and testing beliefs which Morton (2003) sees as constructive approaches compared to destructive ones which seek to criticise existing beliefs. Although pragmatic knowing is concerned with what works for the practitioner it is not generalised because it is more concerned with the local situation and individual learning (Jarvis 1999). Both constructive and destructive approaches are seen as pertaining to epistemology. Deconstruction could be argued to be an approach that is especially concerned with a critique of knowing being interested with noticing discrepancies between meaning and what is asserted as truth or knowing (Sarup 1993). The relationship between belief and knowledge can become confused with belief being mistaken for knowing further complicated by the problem of certain, taken for granted phenomena (such as motive) the truth of which depends on judgements made in unique situations (Heaton 2004). In chapter four, therefore, it was argued that learning about psychotherapy requires an approach that recognises the importance of context so learning cannot lead to a once and for all kind of knowing. Such an approach seems more akin to pragmatic knowledge except that this can lead to a divorcing of knowledge from our responsibility to others hence the ethical dimension of knowledge (Jarvis 1999). The philosophy of Dewey (1929) was also concerned with a provisional epistemology arguing for the importance of fallibility whereby the temporary and unstable aspects of knowing are just as important as the steady, more systematised aspects. Indeed he saw that one could
never draw a clear distinction between such differences and experience would lead to continual rethinking of theory (Dewey 1929). A pragmatic, experiential or practice based epistemology has implications for this study which is seeking to develop a methodology that can provide evidence of the role the unknown plays in learning about psychotherapy. The above ideas inform the question of what kinds of epistemology can construct and deconstruct knowledge beliefs and how they inform this study.

In a continually shifting praxis such as psychotherapy (or more specifically learning about psychotherapy) three issues arise from a concern with epistemology. These are arguments for an ethical epistemology, an epistemology of practice and consideration of the implications of deconstruction for epistemology, all being concerned with the kinds of knowing that are provisional and contextual. An ethical epistemology has already been discussed in terms of Levinasian ethics as relational, non positing and contemporaneous. The role of an alternative epistemology of practice (Schon 1991, 1992) and of deconstruction (Foucault 1972, 1986, Derrida 1976, 1978) in this study will now be discussed.

Schon (1992) has argued that the foundations of practice based disciplines base their education and training on a number of assumptions arising from rationalist, scientific epistemology of knowledge and notions of practice as technique based. He argues that whilst the major professions recognise uncertain, complex and unique situations in practice they are relegated to what he calls a junk category in order to preserve the prevailing epistemology and its legitimization (Schon 1992) which seems a similar category to what current worldwide quality initiatives would call the ‘non conformant’ (ISO 9000). The unknown could be seen to be an aspect of this junk category which Schon also argues cannot be investigated from the dominant empirical rational standpoint. Schon (1992) calls for investigation of the reflections of practitioners through exploration and description of how they learn to recognise and respond to unique situations. Within psychotherapy there is a call for each moment of practice to be viewed anew or coming to each session by "refraining from memory or desire" (Bion 1970: 31) thus viewing every therapeutic hour as unique, or non conformant. This view of practice and thus learning about practice also relates to the view of Levinas (1997) where the ethical involves acceptance based on unknowing,
being without pre conceptions rather than knowing as a pre ordained set of rules and practices that could become a self serving cycle (Clegg & Slife 2004). The implication for this study is that either there is no such thing as a typical, ordinary or predictable experience because it all depends on context or on the contrary the unique is the ordinary. In this sense the practice of psychotherapy is seen as always facing the unknown. The investigation of the unknown will, therefore, take into consideration how to help research subjects reflect on their experiences in practice as a way of contextualising their learning about the unknown without setting out a series of pre determined questions such as an interview schedule.

One of the problems of attempting to construct an epistemology based on experiences of how practitioners learn to identify and react is that these descriptions will then become a body of knowledge seeking to explain and predict phenomena related to how to recognise and respond to unique situations. For example in nursing, another practice based discipline, the work of Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986) has been developed as a way of predicting the learning and development of nurses from 'novice to expert' by Benner (1984) and these criteria became a cornerstone for assessment in the profession. So the ideas that attempted to illustrate something of the process of learning to respond in unique and complex situations became incorporated as a series of tasks or categories of knowing, something Foucault (1972) draws attention to.

Foucault’s archaeology of knowledge explores the knowing connected to the French ‘savoir’ as opposed to ‘connaitre’ where an exploration of knowing could be based on the conditions or knowledge where the subject is “situated and dependent” as opposed to a body of knowledge respectively (Foucault 1972:183). In the case of savoir knowing could be seen to be something we possess or have compared to connections between connaitre and etre and knowing that comes from our very being.

The ontological basis of knowing then becomes lost in the process of classification, the text is split from the context, the body (of knowledge) from the soul. Foucault (1972:182) sees knowledge as that “which one can speak in a discursive practice” rather than simply resulting from all that is considered true and includes: the conditions that exist in allowing the subject to take up a place; “the field of coordination and subordination” where the said is interrogated and incorporated by the already said which in turn becomes the criteria for future analysis and; the
potential for usage within discursive practice. Viewed in this way a critique of the
relationship between power and knowledge becomes more possible whereas the
objective classification of knowledge cannot see how particular discourses, as truth,
become dominant and perpetuate themselves. Hoeller (1986) highlights Foucault's
concern with transcendental phenomenology being caught in the same empirical and
historical repetition which also cannot make account of the play of power within it
because of the parenthesising that separates the subject from the kinds of conditions
that are constitutive. The problem does not therefore seem to be with the hermeneutic
phenomenology of Heidegger (1962). Hoeller (1986) does point out that perhaps
Foucault's questioning represents recognition of the dilemmas already realised by
Husserl in the shifting phenomenology to intersubjectivity complicated by the
dichotomy between phenomenology and phenomenological psychology. What
emerges as crucial is the recognition of Kiekegaard (1941) that knowledge has a
relationship to the knower and where through the work of Binswanger the importance
of dreaming and imagination cannot and should not be reduced to psychological
analysis (Foucault 1986). The problem with such an analysis being that it leads to a
return to theory or indeed the past, as in Freudian analysis, rather than what Foucault
calls the "coming-to-be and the totality of the existence itself" (Foucault 1986:57).
Such a reduction creates three potential problems in this study where the unknown is
always returned to the already known, where the power play invoked in that return
goes unrecognised and where the daytime images of the dream (the static content) are
nothing like the imagining subject always underway. As Foucault (1986) shows:

"If the meaning of the dream is always beyond the images gleaned upon waking, this is not
because they veil hidden forces, but because wakefulness can reach the dream only mediately,
and because between waking image and dream imagination, the distance is as great as
between quasi-presence in a constituted world and original presence to a world being
constituted. Analysis of a dream starting from the images supplied by waking consciousness
must precisely have the goal of bridging that distance between image and imagination, or, if
you will, of effecting the transcendental reduction of the imaginary." (Foucault 1986:73)

There is then a series of questions about how to develop a phenomenological
methodology that does not return to existing theory of the unknown, either
psychological or psychoanalytic or indeed the personal theories of the researcher, but
considers how the imagining subject as always underway can somehow be illustrated
without being fixed and how the play of power could be shown to operate, for
example in the relational. In its concern with imagination and dreaming, reverie has
been argued as a way of opening up or revealing and is as important in the analysis of the said (such as data analysis) as in the saying (such as interviews). It is intended that reverie opens up possibility without always returning to the already said. The issue of power can be revealed through language and in particular the work of Derrida (1976, 1978) is helpful in this.

One of the problems, however in any act of saying or analysis of the said is the way language both reveals and conceals. Derrida’s (1976, 1978) metaphysics of presence highlights how binary oppositions can show what is concealed through what is revealed or said, in effect also hiding what we don’t know. In this sense the unknown is always subverted by the known and categories of knowing never explicitly reveal what is unknown although Derrida’s (1978) form of deconstruction argues that the authority of the word, the saying and the said, holds power over the unsaid. The scientific, rational and empirical which are concerned with concrete evidence of knowing and its legitimation are caught in this epistemological power structure. Any form of categorisation, even based on an epistemology of practice as opposed to the technical rational can end up taking the same position. Thus this project carries with it the potential for re-presenting the unknown as a series of known categories, something which is already present in terms of the way understanding of the unknown has emerged through previous chapters. Additionally any methodology for exploring the unknown needs to be able to recognise how the unknown may be concealed by what is known and the way language sets this up as well. In chapter seven the ideas of Foucault (1972, 1986) and Derrida (1976, 1978) will also become guiding principles for deconstructing the research findings in order to reveal what has been concealed through the methodology, methods of analysing the unknown in learning about psychotherapy, and the researcher’s own position. It is intended that this will lead to further recommendations for developing phenomenological research methodology. The extent to which Phenomenological research methods address or propagate some of the above difficulties, for example, by being always concerned with presenting knowledge of a phenomenon through various kinds of meaning based categories (Colaizzi 1978, Giorgi 1985 Hycner 1985) will now be reviewed. The way such research methods could still be utilised in this study will be discussed and in particular the research method of Giorgi (1985).
5.4 From Phenomenology to Phenomenological Research Methods

The fundamental ideas of phenomenology have been developed by a number of researchers into a series of stages or phases in light of the times or as Crotty puts it "grafted on to the local stock" (Crotty 1996). There is a difficulty here in that such stages change the essential nature of phenomenology because there is an expectation that certain things should be done at certain times rather than staying with what appears when it appears. Such approaches may, however, help one to find a way of conducting phenomenological research by providing a structure for the study of phenomena whilst at the same time phenomenology requires a critique and thus also recognition of the limitations of such approaches. There are a range of such phenomenological methods which have in common stages for data analysis involving interview transcription and the identification of meaning based categories which, through the phenomenological reduction, are then used to develop a description of the structure of a phenomenon under study (Giorgi 1970, 1985, Colaizzi 1978, Hycner 1985). A more recent phenomenological method, Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis as developed by Smith (1995, 2004) has much in common with these earlier methods being concerned with the meaning and personal perception ascribed to experiences. Each method uses slightly different terminology for the meaning based categorisation although this appears to represent similar ways of identifying essential meanings and in view of the researcher's previous experience the main focus here will be with Giorgi's (1975, 1985) phenomenological research method. This approach reflects a way of starting with the known (as a known research method) in order to provide a jumping off point for recognising currently unknown aspects and potentially new ideas for a phenomenological research method. In summary this section explores the extent to which phenomenological method is helpful in operationalising phenomenology and where not and thus leading to a rationale for further developing the phenomenological method. A number of questions arose with regard to the three main processes of phenomenology as part of the phenomenological reduction and which concerned: the extent to which the researcher is engaged in an interpretive as opposed to a purely descriptive activity, the problem of understanding bracketing as being simply about setting aside one's own presuppositions which seem to continually arise and metamorphose in unexpected ways and how and why the researcher includes or rejects aspects of the data such that horizontalisation is difficult to stay with.
Separating out these three processes is not, however, straightforward the problem being that they can be removed from the context of phenomenology and turned into steps when in fact they underpin every aspect of phenomenology or stage of the phenomenological reduction and method.

By exploring one method of undertaking phenomenological research this section also aims to show how the issues arising from previous phenomenological research lead to the further development of Giorgi’s (1975, 1985) approach. This is because the method was seen to help reveal the phenomenon under study whilst at the same time concealing it (Cayne & Loewenthal 2004). Whilst the method provided a way into phenomenological enquiry by beginning a conversation about what it means to feel ready to call oneself a psychotherapist it was less helpful in addressing the discourse between researcher and researched because it seemed more like a kind of content analysis as opposed to exploring the interpersonal and intra psychic processes of discourse, whether conscious or unconscious. Thus a serendipitous finding that (at the time) was either missed by the researcher’s inexperience or difficult to recognise through the method (or both) was related to the sense of inference in what people spoke of. Unknown forces were at play. It is also argued that there is an essential dichotomy in the contemporary idea of empirical phenomenological research because phenomenology is concerned less with the provable, disprovable or explainable and more with the paradoxical, the unknown and the mysterious, as Merleau-Ponty states:

"The world and reason are not problematical. We may say if we wish that they are mysterious, but their mystery defines them: there can be no question of dispelling it by some 'solution' it is on the hither side of all solutions." Merleau-Ponty (1962:xx)

In fact Giorgi (1985) recognises the disjuncture between phenomenological philosophy, phenomenological psychology and psychological research. He also clearly argues that the meaning units discriminated from interview transcripts in his method are not the same as traditional content analysis which he views as a technique for systematising manifest content and which is more in keeping with a quantitative methodology and more common to psychological research in general. The alternative view of content could be compared to Freud’s (1976) ideas about latent content which Giorgi (1985) appears to infer through the idea of depth of analysis. These ideas about latent content seem important in researching the unknown which has already been argued as being inferred rather than necessarily spoken of directly. However,
whilst the case for an approach that can address this latent aspect of meaning is made, it is also viewed as a necessary requirement to return the data analysis to an established set of criteria inherent in natural science (i.e., psychology) compared to allowing the criteria for analysis of data to emerge from the data itself, which would be phenomenological. Whilst phenomenology could be viewed as a theory and therefore a set in itself it is also different because of this requirement to let the criteria for analysis emerge rather than returning the saying to the already said. Having argued that phenomenology is already empirical and scientific why then overlay it with another set especially when that set contradicts what phenomenology already intends? Thus there is still an inherent disjuncture within Giorgi’s (1985) method that perhaps reflects the original rift between psychology and phenomenology which was preceded by a time when psychology was allied to a “philosophy based in practice” where there was a view that “practice is more fundamental than theory or knowledge” (Loewenthal 2004:217). So is it possible to take an established method and develop it in such a way that it is more in keeping with the original phenomenological stance?

Giorgi’s (1975, 1985) method of extrapolation of meaning units is viewed, however, as a dynamic and flexible method which can go beyond manifest content. Nowhere is this potential more evident than in the phase of data analysis where a process of imaginative variation transforms the identified units of meaning from textural description to structural themes (Giorgi 1985, Moustakas 1994). Despite questioning the problem of reviewing data from preordained criteria and recognising the way “naive subjects express in a cryptic way multiple realities” Giorgi (1985:17) views this transformation as a shift from everyday expressions into psychological language. Whilst this does represent an attempt to be explicit about the way the researcher takes up a position and inevitably constitutes something of what he calls the psychological reality for the research he also points out the possibility of carrying out the phenomenological reduction from a variety of other sets. This is where Becker’s (1992) approach to Giorgi’s method differs in that she attempts to stay with the life worlds and experience of research subjects (their constructions of reality) compared to the use of psychological language. It seems that Becker (1992) follows Giorgi’s method through the stage of firstly reading the transcripts to get a sense of the whole and secondly discriminating units of meaning within each transcript by recognising
transitions in meaning. In turn this leads to the third step of defining the major constituent of meaning within each meaning unit. At the third stage, however, instead of transforming the subjects’ everyday expressions (meaning units) into psychological language Becker (1992) attempts to stay with the everyday language and experience of participants noticing the salient features and meanings, their order of importance of the individual and how they fit together. These ‘meanings and manifestations’ are then transformed into a descriptive portrayal at, stage four, for each individual maintaining something of how the different categories of meaning are also interrelated. Something of the context remains. At the fifth stage, rather than Giorgi’s description of the structure of the phenomenon being presented on the basis of a transformation of latent meaning into psychological language, Becker (1992) develops the individual descriptive portraits based on summaries of common meaning units which are thematised as a way of providing a structural description of the phenomenon under study finally moving away from individual life worlds. It is intended to base the stage three to five processes on reverie in order to further develop the method. This begins to address the issue that phenomenology is a theory that critiques theorising when undertaken too soon in the phenomenological reduction.

One problem with Becker’s (1992) approach, however, is the way only commonalities appear to be identified whereas it has already been argued that the unique is the ordinary in a practice based discipline such as psychotherapy. Thus the unusual or unique also needs to be included although how such differences can be identified and accounted for in the data analysis will need to be discovered through the phenomenological attitude of not discounting the strange by allowing the process of horizontalisation. Freud’s (1911 in Gay 1995) requirement to allow “evenly-suspended attention” is echoed in the ideas of reverie as a way of not theorising or explaining phenomena too soon and not focusing on any single phenomenon over another.

It is also important to note that whilst phenomenological research methods have as their emphasis the description of personal experience, as lived, the main focus of the method is with what Giorgi (1985) calls “the post descriptive analysis” which is essentially the data analysis. Giorgi (1985) goes on to raise the question of what constitutes adequate description. He argues for the value of description, given that
behavioural distortions can mislead just as descriptive communications can, for example through interviews, but it is not clear how one decides what constitutes adequate description of a phenomenon, for example through the selection of participants or during the interview process. Earlier the argument for reverie as a way of conducting the data collection, through interviews was made, as well as being a method for informing the data analysis. Ways in which reverie might work alongside the phenomenological description will be reviewed. Reverie at the time of saying can be a way of opening up a train of ideas and associations within a limited time span providing a richer range of data and remaining open to what is given. Although Hollway and Jefferson (2000) tend to use a series of broad questions in their interview technique they also argue for a biographical-interpretive approach which helps the researcher avoid destroying the participants' stories through addressing their own instead. The four processes they suggest are: the use of open questions, the eliciting of stories, the avoiding of why questions and following participants train of ideas and language. The intention in this project is to use an unstructured interview relying on this approach which is in line with Kvale's (1996) ideas that an open description in phenomenological research cannot be prescribed. Further he draws on Merleau-Ponty's instructions to describe as specifically and fully as possible without attempting to link to causality (why questions) (Kvale 1996). Subsequently there can be no pre set guide of what constitutes a full description in either the interview or final presentation of the phenomenon. The question of what constitutes a full description relates also to questions of validity addressed in section 5.5.

Another point where the essentially descriptive process appears to change occurs during the data analysis via a process of imaginative variation. This occurs during the stage of the phenomenological reduction where the meaning units identified from interview transcripts undergo a process of transformation or translation towards a final structure of the phenomenon under study. Like reverie this process is concerned with imagination as "a free play of fancy" which allows any possibility by remaining open to many different forms of meaning although at this stage it is the researcher who engages with the data (Moustakas 1994). Moustakas (1994:98) quotes Husserl's idea that "We find in fantasy the potential meaning that makes the invisible visible." At this point a question of whether this involves an interpretive as opposed to purely descriptive process seems important. Whilst bracketing can be seen as setting aside
the natural attitude of explanation and theorising the process of imaginative variation cannot involve the researcher bracketing their own existence or experiencing. It is the groundlessness of intentionality and the forgetting of being within knowing, so that "a person who understands, understands himself, projecting himself upon his possibilities" which Gadamer (2003:260) highlights. Giorgi (1985) himself points out that the meaning units identified by this stage do not exist independently of the researcher's set but rather are related to it. This project has already clarified the intention of remaining within a phenomenological rather than psychological set but nevertheless the question of being again arises. Ogden (1994:1) has already been discussed as illustrating how reverie leads to intersubjective experience which means "finding yourself becoming a subject whom you have not met, but nonetheless recognise" and Hollway and Jefferson (2000:52) define this in research as "the person who is produced in the interview is, in this sense, new (but also recognisable)."

In this study the two streams of phenomenology are not seen as mutually exclusive so there is a need to be willing to explore when to bracket experiences such as imaginings and when not to although it is unclear how these decisions will be made until the data is analysed. On reflection, however, it seems that Merleau-Ponty (1964) does not see these two phenomenological perspectives as mutually exclusive. As we are in time continually forming and reforming the story there needs to be a continual process of checking out presuppositions and their impact. Lipson puts this rather succinctly stating the need "to both keep yourself in there and out at the same time" (Bergum at al 1991). The effects of intersubjective experience will also be explored after the data analysis when the methodology will undergo a process of deconstruction in chapter seven.

Thinking about such questions led to recognition that whilst there are a number of difficulties within and around phenomenology as a research method, the explicit consideration of these disjunctures or discontinuities opens up new areas of interest in both phenomenology and research (Cayne 2002). Indeed it will be argued that phenomenology is itself concerned with just these kinds of dichotomies and indeed Merleau-Ponty implores us:
"...in order to see the world and grasp it as paradoxical, we must break with our familiar acceptance of it and, also, from the fact that from this break we can learn nothing but the unmotivated upsurge of the world." (Merleau-Ponty 1962:xiv)

There is an increasing recognition that the paradoxical tends to be neglected because the Hegelian dialectic is so implicit in western culture, whereby difference is always about one thing or the other: male, female; mind, body; objective, subjective (Davey 1997). This list is endless because we continually position ourselves as one thing or the other. Laplanche’s critique of this kind of positioning draws attention to our avoidance of such ambiguity because the tension caused by the gap between is a reminder of death which is too much to bear (Laplanche 1999). Phenomenology on the other hand seems to be actually concerned with the paradoxical nature of the world and an attempt to hold the tension between seemingly contradictory ideas such as that between transcendental and hermeneutic phenomenology at the methodological level and for example the relationship between researcher and researched at the practical level.

5.5 Research Design

Whilst methodology clarifies how a particular phenomenon will be studied the research design concerns particular research strategies (Silverman 2000). This section draws on the methodological deliberations above demonstrating how these inform various activities which will then be operationalised as the research methods. These more practical aspects of researching the unknown include definition of key terms within the research question, selection of participants, method of data collection, ethical issues and methods of data analysis. In a way the previous chapters have led to various ways of defining two key terms ‘the unknown’ and ‘learning’ from theoretical perspectives. These terms now need to be operationalised along with the terms ‘psychotherapy’ and ‘students’.

5.5.1 Operational definitions:

Three aspects of the unknown have already been delineated as: a shift from known to unknown and unknown to known, and as an unknown absence that destabilises or creates disturbance, for example as manifest through anxiety. These aspects are set within the context of the question: How do psychotherapists learn about the
unknown? Whilst there are considered to be differences as well as similarities between psychotherapy and counselling the two terms are difficult to separate. The British Association of Counselling (BACP) and Psychotherapy currently define counselling as:

"Counselling takes place when a counsellor meets a client in a private and confidential setting to explore a difficulty the client is having; distress they may be experiencing or perhaps their dissatisfaction with life or loss of a sense of direction and purpose. It is always at the request of the client and no one can properly be 'sent' for counselling nor will a counsellor tell you what to do." (BACP 1993:1)

The United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP) (2004) currently define psychotherapy as:

"Psychotherapy is the provision by qualified practitioners of a formal and professional relationship within which patient(s)/client(s) can profitably explore difficult, and often painful, emotions and experiences. These may include feelings of anxiety, depression, trauma, or perhaps the loss of meaning in one’s life. It is a process which seeks to help the person gain an increased capacity for choice, through which the individual becomes more autonomous and self determined. Psychotherapy may be provided for individuals or children, couples, families and groups." (UKCP 2004)

From the above the similarities seem more pronounced than any difference. Specifications for training and registration are likewise similar with the main difference being in terms of numbers of hours for training, practice, supervision and personal therapy with the UKCP tending to require more hours. This is not, however, seen across all the eight modalities identified within UKCP, some for example having no requirement for personal therapy. Added to this the UKCP (2005) have recently developed standards for psychotherapeutic counselling training with the potential for candidates to register with the UKCP as psychotherapeutic counsellors. The standards are also in line with BACP accreditation requirements. As there are no clearly defined differences between counselling and psychotherapy the two terms are to be used interchangeably although the term ‘psychotherapy’ and ‘psychotherapist’ will be used in this project.

There is also an ongoing debate about whether there is a difference between psychoanalysis, psychoanalytic psychotherapy and psychotherapy continues with, for example Mieli (2003) who highlights how psychoanalysis is seen as a form of psychotherapy by the Psychoanalytic Consortium in the United States of America.
A major difference between psychoanalysis and other forms of psychotherapy being the number of times per week therapists see clients and indeed that therapists have experienced the same degree of therapy within their training. A group of psychoanalysts and psychoanalytic psychotherapists split off from the UKCP to form another body for registration the British Confederation of Psychoanalysts (BCP 2005) which includes psychoanalysts, analytical psychologists, psychoanalytic psychotherapists and child psychotherapists.

The register of the British Psychological Society (BPS 2001) also includes psychologists specialising in psychotherapy and identifies a division within chartered psychologist status known as counselling psychology (BPS 2004). They see psychotherapy and counselling as being set within the context of psychology and like the UKCP and BACP recognise various psychotherapy modalities with trainees undertaking additional training in one or more of these approaches in addition to original chartered psychologist status. Evidence of training, supervision, personal and ongoing professional development are also required although personal therapy is seen as one way of undertaking personal development and recognising how the therapists own patterns could influence their practice (BPS 2001, 2004).

As phenomenological methodology is less concerned with understanding, including theoretical knowing, and more with experience it is intended to interview psychotherapists who are registered with any of the major bodies cited above. Psychotherapists are therefore operationally defined as: “those engaged in psychotherapeutic or counselling practice who are registered as psychotherapists or counsellors with the UKCP, BACP, BCP and BPS”.

Within the major registering bodies there are also a range of modalities with, for example eight modalities for psychotherapy being identified by the UKCP but which are only a small number of the four hundred plus modalities (Heaton 1996). He goes on to question why so many seemingly different modalities have emerged and whether this is more the result of finding a way to fend off anxiety caused by difference resulting in the kind of defensive and neurotic splitting outlined for
example by Klein (1988). Thus a question arises about whether this project should split the unknown off into different tranches which are the play for power but act as cover stories which create a boundary beyond which it becomes impossible to see (Derrida 1987). Ways of taking into consideration such anxiety have already been discussed in this chapter and anxiety is considered to be a factor in the development of the research methodology, in particular an interest in reverie. As this project is set within a phenomenological methodology the focus of the research question is on experience of the unknown rather than about appropriating the unknown within a school or modality of psychotherapy. Whilst phenomenology is still a position from which to investigate the research question it is a theory that seeks to delay theorising. Whilst the experience of research subjects will be coloured by the theoretical orientation of their training and culture there is a need to contain the focus of this project. The impact of theoretical and cultural issues on the unknown is an interesting area for further research but the original aim of this project is to find ways of opening up the unknown, through exploration of learning experiences, sufficiently to develop a methodology for researching the unknown further in future. At this stage, therefore there will be no distinction made regarding theoretical orientation except in so far as it emerges through the experience of the research participants during interviews.

The importance of experience in this project is connected to the way learning has been defined theoretically in chapter four. Learning is seen as intrinsically related to experience and the ability to learn from experience linked to an ability to reflect on experience (Kolb1984, Heron 1989, Rogers1983, Schon 1990). Thus learning is seen as resulting from the ability to think about and question experience, including the kinds of experience that may evoke unpleasure, for example in the form of anxiety. The emphasis on personal experience also highlights the relationship of knowing/unknowing to the knower, for example (Polanyi 1969) which can then more easily be noticed and with it the way personal meaning is structured. Learning can be seen to come from our very being. Indeed learning here is concerned more with subjective ways of knowing than objective facts, the need for which arises because of a need to avoid anxiety by repeating old patterns. Hence learning is concerned here with the possibility for something new to emerge or as Lacan
proposed to his students, not bringing everything back to the known by trying to understand which gets in the way of something new and different, thus one is required to cease attempting to understand (Fink 1996). According to Lacan learning is not, therefore, about the acquisition of ready-made knowledge but concerned with the condition that enables "textual knowledge", which is situation specific, to be created anew (Felman 1987). Learning is thus operationalised in this study as "the condition that makes possible thinking about experience, without attempting to understand or theorise, so that something new (new meanings) can emerge".

5.5.2 Selection of participants

The selection of participants is seen to be important in qualitative approaches because of the effects on generalisability and there is a need, therefore, to clarify the approach to the selection of participants. Silverman (2000) identifies four aspects to the issue of sampling which can inform decisions about the approach to generalisability. These are: the possibility of combining qualitative research with quantitative measures of populations, purposive sampling, theoretical sampling and an analytic model. The terms 'sample' and 'sampling' are, however, seen by Sanford (1981) as objectifying and as there is no intention to reduce people to a collection of observable behaviours, because this study is exploratory, these terms will not be used, but instead the term 'selection of participants'.

Firstly there is the question of whether to combine qualitative research with quantitative measures of populations in order to establish representativeness of the participants through comparison between the individual to the wider population (Silverman 2000). Of the four possible approaches to selection of participants this first is seen to be in contradiction to the principles of the latter three approaches which are more in keeping with the methodological approach in this study. The integration of descriptive and interpretative activities within phenomenology and the focus on developing a methodology to explore the unknown do not lend themselves to attempting to isolate specific variables within a particular population. Silverman (2000) appears to view this kind of combining of qualitative and quantitative data as
pertaining to comparative approaches because it highlights similarities and differences between different situations. At this stage of researching the unknown the main aim is to explore a method for opening up the unknown for further research and indeed the similarities and differences between individuals, let alone across different settings or modalities, are unknown. Hence the need to generalise from a representative sample is not within the remit of this study.

Secondly whilst purposive sampling is often associated with convenience and accessibility it is also concerned with selecting participants because they will be able to illustrate something, such as a social phenomenon, that is of relevance to the research question (Silverman 2000). Thus there is a need to select individuals or groups who are within a setting where the phenomenon to be studied is more able to emerge (Denzin & Lincoln 1994). In researching the unknown, within the question of how psychotherapists learn about the unknown, it has already been clarified that experience and meaning are more important here than theoretical conceptualisation. This is mainly because various theoretical aspects of the unknown, for example the unconscious, have been argued to actually hinder experiencing and meaning making, within a phenomenological methodological perspective. These arguments also relate to the third approach to selecting participants, theoretical sampling, which is concerned with generalising to theoretical schemata rather than to populations (Silverman 2000). Mason (1996) still sees the participants as a sample constructed on the basis of theoretical concepts including the research question, theoretical framework and phenomena to be studied, arguing that it is then more possible to test out theoretical explanations. Again the aim of this study is not to test or develop a generalizable theory about the unknown but to develop a method for exploring it and furthermore a method that will not incorporate the unknown within a grand narrative. The findings may, however have the "wider resonance" also argued by Mason (1996:6) as related to generalizability.

Fourthly the analytic model which argues for the relevance of even a single case hinges on generalizability being viewed as what is possible (Silverman 2000). At this point the ideas of Peraklyva (2004:297) on generalizability become helpful wherein the distinction is made between results that are generalizable to the population of
psychotherapists compared to "...generalizable as descriptions of what any counsellor or other professional can do, given that he or she has the same array of interactional competencies". In this study generalizability is not the intention in terms of generalizability as representative of a whole population (Black 1993) and instead a useful guiding principle will be that other psychotherapists on reading the research would see the descriptions as having possibility. In this sense: The possibility of various practices [phenomena] can be considered generalizable even if the practices are not actualized in similar ways across different settings (Perakyla 2004:297). In this study the idea of different settings could also be related to the different modalities wherein the unknown is conceptualised and implemented in different ways but essentially recognised as having possibility even across what Perakyla (1995) calls linguistic and cultural boundaries. Thus the research participants could be drawn from within any modality or across various modalities and a convenience or opportunistic method of sampling was seen to suffice. This was achieved by inviting psychotherapists to be interviewed via a network of colleagues who circulated the flier in appendix one. Generalizability is defined here, therefore, not as generalizable defined as representative of a whole population (Black 1993) such as psychotherapists, but seen as having possibility (Perakyla 2004) or resonance (Mason 1996).

The number of participants to be selected also has a bearing on generalizability. Kvale (1996) highlights the need to balance the needs of generalizability with the need to make in depth elucidation of the data generated. As this study is aimed at exploration and description rather than generalization (except in so far as it addresses possibility) it was important not to collect too wide a range of data (as from a large number of interviews, to be discussed later) but enough to address the issue of adequate description. Giorgi (1985) highlights, however, that it is difficult to decide what constitutes adequate description of a phenomenon and this is complicated further by the arguments made in 5.4 about the difference between manifest and latent content. The identification of latent content is seen to be more in keeping with researching the unknown and intensifies the problems whereby meaning is seen as always on the way and given the nature of language always unstable and provisional. Another aspect of this balance is that between heterogeneity and homogeneity of the data collected which means describing a range of experiences that include both unique
and shared patterns (Patton 1990). Subsequently this involves selecting a sub group, in this case psychotherapists registered with any of the major bodies identified above. An additional factor which needed to be taken into consideration was that the major purpose of this study was to develop a methodology for exploring the unknown which adds to the complexity of the data collection and analysis. In order to enable the focus of exploring the unknown in order to develop a methodology it was decided to interview ten participants.

A network of colleagues and associates were sent a flier detailing the research (appendix one) and asked to pass this on in order to invite practising psychotherapists to be interviewed. During either telephone conversations or email the purpose of the study was stated as follows: "I am interested in conducting unstructured interviews (up to an hour) exploring whether you feel you have learned about the unknown and if so, how." From this process of networking psychotherapists volunteered to be interviewed. It was likely that people responding to this issue would already have an interest in the unknown but as the main purpose of the study was to develop a methodology for exploring the unknown the sampling was opportunistic and convenience based rather than representative. It was envisaged that interviewing experienced psychotherapists would also help to highlight problems with the research methodology and methods. Based on the discussions of learning about psychotherapy in chapter four it was, for example, assumed that experienced psychotherapists would be able to reflect and comment on the process of the interview and its effects on their ability to speak of their experiences of learning about the unknown.

5.5.3 Methods for data collection

The phenomenological emphasis in this study is on each individual psychotherapist's description, meaning and personal experience of learning about the unknown which seemed apposite with Kvale's (1983) ideas about how understanding emerges in qualitative interviews (see table 1). Hence the research question is: "how do psychotherapists learn about the unknown?" Kvale (1983:174) proposes that interviews used in qualitative studies have the purpose of gathering "descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena". To this end participants were asked two questions. Firstly
whether they felt they had learned about the unknown and secondly a choice of one or other of two further questions. If participants did not agree with the unknown a question of what they felt they did need to learn about as a psychotherapist was intended or if they had learned about the unknown, how had they learned.

What is especially applicable between the above way of understanding interviewing and phenomenology is that each is concerned with experience prior to any theorising.

<table>
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<th>Table 1</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Modes of understanding of qualitative research interviews.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Centred on the interviewees life-world</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Seeks to understand the meanings of phenomena in the life-world</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Qualitative</td>
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<td>- Descriptive</td>
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<td>- Specific</td>
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<td>- Presuppositionless</td>
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(See Kvale 1983:174-179)

Phenomenology is concerned with "the appearance of things, as contrasted with the things themselves" (Spinelli 1989:2). This means that we understand the world, from the point of view of our individual perception, so that rather than being able to 'know' an objective reality we can only know such things as they appear to us. The phenomenological approach of Husserl thus requires us to notice both phenomena which are given to us and their modes of emerging (Husserl 1929). Essentially phenomenology is concerned with thought and in attending to thoughts which may at first seem strange or out of place. We need to attend to such thoughts but also to the ways in which they come to us.

So whilst the main thesis in phenomenology is concerned with conscious thought, unconscious effects are not discounted or to put it another way whilst there is a concern with what is known through consciousness the unknown and its effects are
welcomed too. Thus trusting our experience of the world is crucial although we need to be able to question it too because of the effects created by unconscious processes, interpreted in this study as unknown processes, which in research are recognised by Hollway and Jefferson (2000). In order to attempt this different way of thinking we need to engage in several disciplines which then become the cornerstone of phenomenological research. These are: firstly bracketing, which is the setting aside of judgements, presuppositions and theories including personal theories, which incidentally can be the most difficult to notice, in order to remain open to our experience as it is given; secondly description which is related to bracketing in that the phenomenon is described rather than for example analysed from the position of any particular theoretical leanings and thirdly horizontalisation which requires each piece of information to be treated with equal regard rather than ascribing too quickly significance of one thing over another (see Husserl 1960).

Thus the concern in phenomenological research is an attempt to reconsider a phenomenon such as "how do psychotherapists learn about the unknown" from the point of view of not believing you already know what this entails. Of course in order to take this viewpoint it is also necessary to explore what assumptions one already holds about the phenomenon, and chapter two highlighted the researchers own experiences and assumptions as well as more theoretical assumptions in chapters three and four. Thus bracketing does not mean ignoring one’s assumptions but as with brackets in mathematics what is within the brackets needs attending to first! Crotty makes an additional point about bracketing suggesting that it is not just the researcher who must set aside their presuppositions but also the interviewees and it is the researcher’s role to engage with them in such a way that phenomena are discerned as given by the participants and not as constructed by the researcher (Crotty 1996).

Should bracketing be seen as an either or option rather than as a process of considering when it is appropriate and when it is not? Simply deciding to bracket one’s assumptions rather than continually examining them and their impact on the study does not seem to be enough. Kvale (1996) illustrates this as a difference between the hermeneutic and empirical phenomenological perspectives in research interviews. He highlights the way hermeneutics focuses on interpretation of meaning, with the interviewer attending to their prior knowledge of the phenomenon as they
engage in conversation with the interviewee whilst the empirical phenomenological interviewer is open to the frame of reference of the interviewee with prior knowledge bracketed (Kvale 1996). In 5.4 it was argued that these approaches are not mutually exclusive and indeed the impact of intersubjective experiencing will be reviewed in the deconstruction stage (chapter 7) of this thesis.

The researcher’s approach, during interview, is then to facilitate description rather than “analytical reflection” or “scientific explanation” in order to restrict judgements both in terms of personal knowledge and theoretical knowledge (See for example Merleau-Ponty 1962). The researcher then becomes interested not just in what sense or meaning people make of certain phenomena but also in which phenomena people attach meaning. Setting aside presuppositions includes the question of how to engage with participants and their experience without assuming that the unknown is something that psychotherapists learn about or that the various ways of understanding the unknown, as already discussed, will appear. The first issue will be addressed by initially asking participants whether they think they have learned about the unknown rather than starting with the actual research question which could be seen to take this for granted and then being willing to engage with them whatever their subsequent response. The second issue will be addressed through the ideas about reverie which have already been identified as a way of engaging in order to overcome, to some extent the effects of anxiety as well as being attuned to recognise when it does appear. This will involve inviting participants to explore either their experience of not learning about the unknown or their experience of learning about the unknown, depending on response to the first question.

Reverie can also be seen to be less concerned with positing the unknown as the unconscious, or any other theoretical construction, being more open to something new or something beyond the cover story. It also enables attention to be given to the intersubjective experience between interviewer and interviewee where knowledge is seen to be generated through the interrelational, which is in line with Merleau-Ponty’s (1962) phenomenology which acknowledges the intentional as well as the influence of being in the world. To some extent this means that the researcher, like the therapist will not bracket everything but instead attempt to decide when to offer their own interpretation or reverie and when to stay with the interviewees’. Reverie as an
approach to interviewing also means attending to the telling or saying so that the researcher is interested not just in which phenomena people attach meaning but also in the ways in which they tell their story. Some other practical strategies may be helpful as outlined earlier. These involve the use of: open questions, eliciting stories, avoiding why questions and following the participants train of ideas and language (Hollway & Jefferson 2000) although it is less clear how the intersubjective experience of speaking to another might impact on the interviews.

As was discussed previously, the methodological ideas informing this project do not see transcendental phenomenology and hermeneutic phenomenology as mutually exclusive but as relational or interplay between: descriptive compared to interpretive activities, setting aside compared to drawing on experience or the researcher's being in the world and between researcher and research subjects. At this stage it is argued that reverie creates a space for these, sometimes contradictory issues, to be held and thought about. How these decisions unfold will become part of the investigation and resulting development of methodology.

The way the various decisions are made, from establishing a methodological or theoretical framework through the interview process, transcribing of interviews to analysis and reporting of the findings also raises questions about reliability and validity. Conventional views of reliability and validity are based on a positivist epistemology whereby knowledge reflects a stable reality or view of the world whereas in this study the methodology has questioned the way multiple ways of knowing means there can be no final answer and as a result reliability and validity require a different approach. In qualitative research reliability questions whether the researcher would obtain the same findings again (Perakyla 2004) and validity whether the data collected reflects the phenomenon to be studied (Kvale 1996). Giorgi (1985) for example points out how people edit and re edit their stories meaning that there can be no guarantee that participants would offer the same view of a phenomenon at another time and to another researcher and likewise researchers will inevitably interpret data differently. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) suggest that the researcher demonstrates the process by which findings were produced and similarly Kvale (1996) argues for craftsmanship whereby the researcher engages in a process of checking, questioning and theorising, about potential areas of invalidity (such as
researcher bias), throughout the research process. Similarly Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that credibility is the criterion for validity rather than internal validity. This means that the researcher needs to take steps to reveal the process. Baker et al (1992) make just this point, that credibility is only confirmed through qualitative research methods when data collection and analysis techniques are made explicit.

As was discussed earlier phenomenological methodology does in fact guide the researcher throughout the process giving cause to continuously monitor and question one's own bias and whether and when to draw on one's own experience. In this reverie could also be seen to provide a way of revealing the researchers thinking process in arriving at interpretations of the latent content of data. The ways in which these issues unfolded through the data collection and analysis will be revealed in chapter six and the implications for developing a methodology in chapter seven.

5.5.4 Ethical Issues

Like validity and reliability ethical issues occur throughout the research process and are not confined to access and contact with participants. Ethical issues are usually concerned with issues of doing no harm, acting in the best interests of the other, having respect for autonomy, honouring the trust placed in one alongside practical issues such as confidentiality and informed consent or contracting (BACP 2002, Silverman 2000). Hollway and Jefferson (2000:102) mostly see these issues as problematic or even misguided given their proposition of "a defended, psychosocial subject" with the potential for uneasiness leading to anxiety. It is impossible to predict what, for example, participants will disclose and what will cause distress and whether that distress should be seen as synonymous with harm. They propose three aspects to the ethical in research namely: honesty of the researcher in engaging with data and sympathy and respect by which they seem to mean acceptance of the participants' experience, without judgment. Respect is, however subjective and one cannot know how research participants or readers of the research will react to the data presented. For Hollway and Jefferson (2000) acceptance seems to be based on understanding and ethics then becomes posited on theory or the researcher's position as central, which is quite different to the pre intentional, pre theoretical ethical acceptance of Levinas (Hand 1989). One way of addressing the inherent difficulty of
researching as a way of understanding the unknown other, which hinders acceptance of the other, was to attempt to set aside the researcher’s experience and knowing, (through the phenomenological bracketing) whilst remaining open to the idea that the researcher’s position in the world (hermeneutic phenomenology) might yet inform the interview process and data analysis. The way this may happen cannot be posited or predicted but requires thoughtfulness and an openness to the unexpected, for example through reverie.

In this study it has also already been demonstrated that the unknown can resonate with neurotic and existential anxiety because of the essentially conflicted nature of a finite being. Added to this is the difficulty of facing uncertainty and unknowing in a discipline where psychotherapists often began from the position of training in order to become knowledgeable, competent and autonomous practitioners. Here the assumption of autonomy is further seen as problematic because of the illusory desire to place ourselves at the centre and thus avoid our feelings of fragmentation (Lacan 1949). Further the Hebraic notion of heteronomy as opposed to the Greek notion of autonomy recognises the relational as our responsibility to the other and our responsibility for the other’s responsibility (Levinas 1998). This philosophical ethic is important in this study for two reasons. Firstly because it questions the role of ethical frameworks believing that one can never predict what will be an ethical response to the other and this can only be known momentarily in the context of the relationship within time; one can never know what this response will be. Secondly therefore the unknown itself has an ethical dimension or alternatively the ethical involves unknowing.

Added to this are questions about whether contracting and informed consent are for the protection of the researcher rather than the research participants and it may even give a false sense of reassurance where participants are then discouraged from asking questions or voicing concerns about the research. This does not mean that the researcher should not seek consent nor protect the privacy of the individual sources of data. It does mean acknowledging that consent is obtained to protect the researcher and the organisation within which the research is situated and the researcher will need to remain alive to the concerns and queries of participants, including that which may not be given voice. Following verbal agreement to take part in the study participants
were interviewed and a copy of the transcript sent to them. This was undertaken because some participants were concerned about the confidential nature of material such as reference to clients. Having checked the transcript and been given the opportunity to change or omit any identifying material or withdraw from the study participants were asked to confirm that they gave permission for the data to be used.

5.5.5 Method of data analysis

One of the main difficulties in this research project is to find or develop a research method that can allow the relationship between transcendental phenomenology and hermeneutic phenomenology rather than polarising the two. The various phenomenological research methods tend, however, to do just this and Moustakas (1994) for example, discriminates between the hermeneutics of Gadamer (2003) as interpretation of texts and the empirical phenomenology of Giorgi (1985) as essentially descriptive. The starting point for this study is the phenomenological method of Giorgi (1975, 1985) which requires the researcher to set aside their own assumptions, whilst engaging with research participants, seen here as an ethical imperative. This is, however, just the starting point in that it provides a known research method as a beginning although the intention is not to exclude the researcher’s own experience although also not to end up justifying or reinforcing it either.

Initially the data analysis will utilise Giorgi’s empirical phenomenological research method (Giorgi 1975, 1985) combined with some ideas from Becker (1992) as explored in 5.4. In fact Giorgi’s empirical research method can be seen to focus mainly on how to analyse data collected through interviews (Giorgi 1985). The method seemed to have a logical flow and it claimed a relationship with Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological philosophy (Giorgi 1985). A number of key factors, according to Kvale (1996) link Giorgi’s method with phenomenological philosophy. These are: “fidelity to the phenomena, the primacy of the life world, a descriptive approach, expressing the situation from the viewpoint of the subject, the situation as the unit of the research and the search for meaning” (Kvale 1996:196). These principles seemed to convey the essential elements of phenomenology already outlined above.
The stages of the research method outlined in part 5.4 by Giorgi (1985) and adapted by Becker (1992) are as follows: Firstly reading of the transcripts to get a sense of the whole which serves as a grounding for the next step; Secondly spontaneously discriminating units of meaning within each transcript through identification of transitions in meaning, which then includes defining the major constituent of meaning within each meaning unit; Thirdly identifying salient features and meanings of each meaning unit related to the phenomenon being studied, in this case "how psychotherapists learn about the unknown" staying with the language of the participants as far as possible which then leads to; Fourthly the researcher questions how the meaning units and their elements relate to the research question for each participant which Becker (1992) developed into descriptive portraits of each participant before; Step five and moving away from 'individual life worlds' in order to present the structure of the phenomenon under study (as discussed in 5.4). Thus stages three and four involve illustrating how the meaning units relate to the research question through the constructing of individual descriptive portraits, whilst staying with the language of participants. Stage five involves a construction of a general descriptive statement about the phenomenon of the unknown by moving away from individual life worlds and from the point of view of the research question: "how do psychotherapists learn about the unknown?" This structural description of the phenomenon will be based on summaries, thematic descriptions of common and unique experiences as clarified in 5.4. The data analysis and findings will be presented in chapter six.

Reverie continues to be an important process during the data analysis as well as the data collection because of the way it enables a clearing of a space for: the possibility of something new and interplay between the saying and the said with the requirement to allow the saying a presence through the said rather than a return to the already said. It may be that the researcher's field notes will provide an aide memoir at this time.

In order to engage in the process of questioning as outlined in 5.5.3 it is intended to undertake a process of translation, detranslation and make recommendations for retranslation after Laplanche (1999). The aim is to begin the process of translation (chapter 6) of data using Giorgi's (1975, 1985) method and then to engage in a
process of deconstruction in chapter seven in order to highlight the strengths and deficiencies of the method, in relation to researching the unknown and make suggestions for developing phenomenology in the future. It is intended that this will open up new pathways for future research as a retranslation of the ideas and data developed out of the previous two stages.
TRANSLATING THE UNKNOWN

6.1 Introduction

The data analysis will be presented based on Giorgi’s (1985) five stage method with some adaptations from (Becker 1992). The intention is also to attempt to draw on the earlier discussions on reverie as set out in 5.4 and 5.5. In stage one the interviews which lasted between forty eight and sixty seven minutes were transcribed using the conventions as set out by Silverman (2000). An example of one transcript is included in appendix two. The transcripts then underwent translation into meaning units (stage two) through a process of spontaneously and freely discriminating meaning units. This was followed by identification of the salient features and meanings through reverie (stage three). At stage three the researcher began to consider how the meaning units related to the phenomenon being studied. In line with the above methods this process continues during the fourth and fifth stages of the data analysis by considering how the data relates to the research question “how do psychotherapists learn about the unknown?” In stage four the individual portraits illustrate the phenomenon from the point of view of each individual’s life world constructed from the salient features and meanings identified in stage three. The individual portrait presented in 6.2.1 was generated from the data analysed in table one from the interviewee named Martha. The remaining individual portraits are located in appendix four. All the above data is presented in 6.2. The names of participants were changed to ensure anonymity. In stage five a general description of the structure of the phenomenon is undertaken by moving away from individual life worlds, summarising common and unique themes and drawing on the researcher’s reveries begun during the previous stages of data analysis. The general description is presented in 6.3

6.2 Stages one to four – Transcription, discrimination of meaning units, summary of their salient features and meanings and individual portraits

Having transcribed and read through the interview transcripts, the process of discrimination of units of meaning based on the researcher’s recognition of changes or transitions in meanings was begun. At this stage it was realised that Giorgi (1985) already begins to summarise these meanings albeit as far as possible using the words
of the participants whereas Becker (1992) stays more with the language of the participants which was the approach undertaken in view of the discussions in chapter five. A number of problems and tensions with this process began to emerge. Firstly breaking down the text made it difficult to allow the free flowing thinking necessary for reverie which tends to need the complete picture of a situation and avoids singling out any one aspect of a phenomenon, at least initially. Whilst it is recognised that meaning is never complete, or known, each subsequent statement has the potential to change the preceding ones. These experiences seemed to contradict Giorgi’s (1985:11) assertion that “one cannot analyze a whole text simultaneously” which is the basis for his argument for identifying meaning units. This created a tension for the researcher between the known method and the development of reverie as phenomenological. One way the researcher managed the issue of context was to continually refer back to the interview transcript and if necessary the taped interview to check understanding. Additionally it also seemed more helpful to leave the text as far as possible as extracted from the transcript rather than editing it.

Secondly it became apparent that this method of data analysis did not address the researcher’s role in the interview and influence on the data. Initially Martha (see table two) had spoken with less comment from the researcher but gradually the interview became more interactive and yet the method did not allow for this in the data analysis. This difficulty became apparent during the first interview analysed, which was with the participant Martha, and crystallised at the stage at which she spoke of the symbiotic relationship (see meaning units 20-26). It seemed that already the text was itself telling the researcher how to analyse it and in a sense the researcher was also learning how to allow the text to speak. This raises questions about the extent to which a predetermined method can stay alive to the text and allow the saying to emerge through the said rather than sticking with the said of a prescribed method. What seemed to be happening was a need to put the method first rather then the other as the text. It was decided to proceed with the stages of analysis in order to continue highlighting these kinds of tensions which could then be explored further in chapter seven and help further develop the methodology which is the main purpose of this study.
A process of cut and paste was used to select a section of text that best illustrated a particular meaning. The section was numbered in order to aid location of data in later stages, and pasted into a column on the left hand side of the page to begin creating a table. The researcher then edited the extract in order to summarise the meaning unit but as far as possible maintaining the participants' language. A space was left between each new section of text in order to distinguish between one meaning unit and the next. At this stage the researcher did not attempt to relate the data to the research question. Following this process the researcher reviewed the meaning units and attempted to identify the salient features and meanings (stage three) drawing on reverie and beginning to consider the data in relation to the research question. Eckartsberg (1998) identifies several questions that the researcher needs to ask, when drawing on Giorgi's (1975) method, to aid reflection as they attempt to explicate the data. The first group of questions focuses on the participants' individual experiences and expressed in terms of the research question "how do psychotherapists learn about the unknown" these are: what is learning about the unknown; what does this statement tell me of learning about the unknown; how does this statement reveal significance about the nature of learning about the unknown? The second question pertaining to the general structure is addressed in 6.3. An example of the table constructed is included here in table 2. Tables for the other nine participants were similarly constructed and are included in appendix three. In order to demonstrate how the researcher worked through stages two to four of the data analysis and following on from table two the individual portrait presented is also for Martha and the remaining nine portraits are located in appendix four. The portraits were constructed by utilising the salient features and meanings summarised by attempting to fit together common elements, for example by placing similar situations, events and meanings together as suggested by Becker (1992).
Table 2 – Stages 2 and 3 of Data Analysis

Discriminated Meaning Units - Martha

1) I acknowledge that I want a structure which will be important.

2) What is the unknown cause if it’s the unknown you don’t know, it’s the unknown and. Is it like the Johari window where there is one quarter that you don’t know and when would you pick up what it is that you don’t know. If its unknown in a particular dimension for instance in the conscious but perhaps its known somewhere else such as the subconscious then is it unknown?

3) I am thinking about what clients bring about unknown, what is unknown when they come to see us. One unknown aspect is the outcome which is already putting structure on it and depending on what theory you work with, such as totally person centred you would just start and somewhere along the line you would end, but how do you know that you’re coming to the end

4) I am struggling a little bit here which is to do with a feeling of unknown, which feels as though its to explode almost to pick up what it is where it is, what does it look like where do you search for it or do you just sit back and accept it.

5) I had thought about the unknown having a lot of aspects. A friend of my son had a friend who died which is a real unknown, a big unknown in life not only in our therapy. As a child, in my twenties and thirties too I would wonder if I could go through it because to know what it was like to go through it wouldn’t be as scary because it wouldn’t be unknown. There is a real struggle at certain stages of your life but then you can almost come to an acceptance

6) I wonder how we can know what its like to observe death but we can’t be subjective about it. We cannot know it for ourselves.

7) I am trying to theorise again and think of the known and the unknown as separate. This is like a Buddhist concept of I and Thou as merging into one. But also there is the idea that something is white so there’s the thesis and something is black so there’s the antithesis and to bring it together there’s the synthesis. So does the unknown exist?

Salient features and meanings related to the phenomenon – learning about the unknown

1m) I aware of her own need for structure and a sense that this would be important.

2m) what/where is unknown, where to locate it so linking to ideas such as the unknown in Johari window or unknown in conscious but known somewhere else such as the unconscious. Using known concepts perhaps to locate oneself.

3m) what is unknown about clients? Firstly there is what they bring and secondly the outcome which becomes a way of placing a structure when you do not really know the ending. This differs however with different theoretical orientation.

4m) own process of the feeling and the tension between deciding whether to search for or accept the unknown.

5m) Death is one aspect of the unknown and how we are around death as the unknown. The real struggle is whether we can then come to accept it.

6m) We cannot know death subjectively or cope with non existence, its unknown.

7m) At this point again recognises own process of reaching for the theory at that moment of recognising a separation between concepts. But if something is neither black nor white then its an anti synthesis which isn’t combined, it doesn’t exist.
8) In questioning whether the unknown anti-synthesis exists M then thinks of how our English language compared to the German language and other languages that have two words for known and the opposite, unknown. They also make a division between to know something and to know someone.

9) M then distinguishes the knowing that is to know which is almost to hold it inside I know, I know that that's a tree out there because it's a tree but how do I know it's a tree because I've learned it's a tree. It's been told over and over to me that it's a tree, it could be called something else. I know something as intuitive that comes from the very being of yourself.

10) M then describes how she picks up feelings in the therapy room where you really know what's going on are not able to quantify it. She then asks where does that come from? It could be the collective unconscious, something that's developed or it could be a spiritual thing something that is all pervading as opposed to and then she loses words.

11) M then thinks about evolution and if you think about a herd of wildebeest and they'll know something is happening and the rest of the group are alerted to it. She wonders how they communicate this, whatever it is. She also relates this to a writer who links intuition with autism and picking up those unknown bits so somehow there is a way of transmitting it. There's a something that transmits it which might be a scent or a feeling that they know.

12) M wonders whether its something we've developed out of ourselves but is still there which is noticeable at times when we feel there's something very odd about something or there's something strange about a person and we pick it up even though there's nothing concrete that can be put to it. The appendix is an example of something concrete which is no longer of use so when it flares up it can be taken away without any harm to the body at all. Like the appendix she believes that something is still there.

13) Here something, the unknown, resists being combined or incorporated because its nothing. This is recognised through her own tendency to slip into theory as a way of holding things together. The something other that resists this she calls it the anti-synthesis.

8m) The English language cannot convey the difference between known and unknown whereas other languages have different words for the opposites. The difference lies elsewhere than a dialectic between knowing or unknowing, for example to know something and to know some one.

9m) The knowing that is, just knowing compared to the knowing that is learned from being taught. The just knowing is intuitive from your very being.

10m) How do we know this kind of intuitive knowing. She then searches for a way of expressing it such as, the collective unconscious suggests unconsciously, it could be developed or it could be spiritual and all pervading but actually it appears to defy language.

11m) Uses a story to show how something that is unknown, perhaps invisible, to us can be communicated or transmitted and picked up intuitively in ways other than words, and in a form that is known hence senses or feelings. How this kind of knowing is transmitted is itself unknown.

12m) She uses the analogy of the appendix to illustrate and attempt to make concrete the something that is there unnoticed and not needed until something unusual happens, such as a inflamed appendix which is when we do notice it. And like the appendix it is still there. M suggests that we do not use it any more, which might be because of the development of language, in a way the shoal of fish and the wildebeest use it.

13m) M explains how language can get in the way of this intuitive experience and communication and suggests that perhaps the development of language has superseded intuition?
14) M agrees that she feels she does use it and wonders whether it's part of one's training. She feels it's probably something that she's had in embryonic form but having gone into counselling has developed it more for example if someone has borderline tendencies I tend to pick that up quite quickly.

15) M recognises, however that she couldn't say with a DSM VI sheet and say that this person's borderline. Instead there's something about that person that she picks up and then works with in a way that might be appropriate for that person. She suggests not to attach too quickly although thinks that might be wrong as well.

16) For M this means working with feelings as very much something in here and from the solar plexus or the stomach or the heart or gut

17) M then explored how she has developed this saying that she has become more confident at it over the years being more ready to use it. She links this with going out to tesco and picking up that someone's angry quite quickly and deal with that in a way that feels appropriate. In counselling she would have it much more contained whereas out in the street or something she would have it contained (. ) would be monitoring it as to how to move on that .

18) M reflects on how she has learned about this intuitive communication. She is unsure but thinks it's there because she sees that her daughter has it now because she has modelled it her daughter can see her doing it to her. She says this is not counselling her. They share how they are feeling and what they think the other is feeling. This could be because M is open with her daughter.

19) M explains this learning as being exposed to it. She uses the word modelling but felt not modelling which is a behaviour which involves watching or observations which are external. All the theories of modelling are seen as external behaviour because you can then change that behaviour which is very much a behaviourist model whereas this is not. It is but its almost by vicarious learning its not even learning.

20) M then describes the psychological birth of the human infant where the mother and the baby are doing this dance between the mother picking up what the baby needs and the baby helping the mother to learn what it
needs. M calls this a symbiotic relationship. She is vocalising that the mother picks it up, communicates it back, like she does with her own daughter.

21) M is saying is that intuition is already there its always been there and its developing what's always been there.

22) M links this with Olzebell's developmental book of education which says that you pick up what's there and you move with it and then says that she wants to theorise again saying that something is a priori its already there that's picked up and developed and then moved on with

23) M suggests that there is no unknown but there is unknown because you don't know it, perhaps its the term unknown perhaps it should be not known yet and you don't know that you know it

24) M continues the idea that they each need to learn in order for the baby to survive and teach the mother what it needs. She then puts this into a therapy context because in a way that could be a symbiotic relationship certainly in the beginning because part of the therapist role is to get in touch with the client not the client's role to get in touch with the therapist its it's the other way around to.

25) M explains how the baby helps the mother to find out on the journey what it is they're trying to say and what it is they're trying to communicate and use the best way for them. This is linked to feelings and the way some people don't want to reveal they're feelings, can't reveal their feelings because they've never been taught how to do that. So the therapist's job is very much like the mother of the baby of trying to find out on the journey what it is they're trying to say what it is they're trying to communicate and use in the best way for them.

26) M also explains this relationship as a therapeutic relationship which can be a reparative relationship where its not necessarily been there in the beginning. The reparative relationship can be internalised and then developed by the individual so that could be the learning process.

21m) Intuition is already there and learning is about developing what's already there.

22m) Acknowledging own process and the need to theorise perhaps arising when she gets near the idea of something already there that cannot be known.

23m) The unknown doesn't exist and the term is problematic because its more that you don't known, not yet known and don't know that you know it.

24m) Learning is located in this symbiotic relationship between the mother and baby and therapist and client. The mother and therapist need to be willing to learn and the therapist has a responsibility to the client not the other way round. This is especially important in the beginning.

25m) Some one needs to be willing to hear the other first and the mother/therapist needs to attempt to recognise what the other is trying to communicate, especially about feelings and then verbalise this. So the therapist reinvests this learning into the relationship in the service of the client. Neither knows what it is they need to learn until they are on the journey.

26m) Learning is again located in a relationship which is conceptualised as reparative. Even though this kind of relationship may not have been there in the beginning it can be internalised and developed.
27) M describes her own learning saying that she thinks her mother had a wonderful gift for communicating and would speak to people and pick up things as well. She didn’t use it as a therapist but she would pick up on people and how they were feeling. She then explains that she doesn’t know how and why she has developed it.

28) M sees this ability to pick up on feelings as a very positive aspect but some people might close down to it of course because its quite scary.

29) M says: “But I’m this is very um (2.) reflective I mean an its its (L) necessarily so if you’d said to me (. ) no you wouldn’t because I’d still be reflecting upon it (2.) I think it (. ) the”

30) M reflected on the experience with her mother where she talked about when she was dying, her own death which was an amazing experience for dealing with and being with including people who have died as well because it wasn’t as scary really. She saw this as a turning point in facing that bit of unknown. She spoke of being allowed up to a certain point to be part of that, not the total unknown but that part of it which she found talking about it a very calming and valuable experience.

31) M thinks about her profession and how she has used it in many ways. At the beginning she used it a lot more in a way that that was unbounded and spontaneous and then she lost it a little in the middle part of training when she started to put theory to things. Then she found she integrates the them and can work with both. So she might have a theory going through her head or she might not have anything going through her head half the time. So she might have an experience that relates to good object relations and work with it but also at an automatic level. She describes whatever this is for the sake of the tape recorder is the bit that is not able to be identified in words. She can use whichever is in the forefront at the time.

32) M reflects on the idea of two experiences where the something she is speaking of is already there and yet develops saying that she is not sure that there are only two activities going on but because there’s watching and whatever the sixth sense is hearing which is elsewhere and otherwise, up there spiritual but its very much embedded in here and she wants a theory for it.

27m) M locates her own learning with her mother’s ability to communicate and pick up on people and their feelings. She doesn’t know how this developed.

28m) The ability to intuit peoples’ feelings is positive but also scary which may be why some people close it down.

29m) Saying something about the interview as reflective and something the interviewer/researcher wouldn’t say (but I don’t know what this is).

30m) The experience of speaking of death as a way of facing that aspect of the unknown which also illustrates the kind of relationship that helps with other unknown kinds of experience. The speaking of it helps us face the scariness.

31m) Explores a learning process where at the beginning she could draw on an un named experience which seems to be not really definable, unknown, but perhaps links to the spontaneous intuitive relating. At the beginning this would be spontaneous and unbounded but this gets lost a little in the middle part of training because the theory leaves less room for it, at least for a while. Then she became able to hold both the theory or knowing and the unknown/unknowing as something she cannot put into words. The use of the word integration implies something of how they come to work together.

32m) Although M acknowledges that something is there and can be observed there is something elsewhere, otherwise, up there spiritual and yet its very embedded in here (pointing to her solar plexus). At this point she recognises she wants a theory.
33) M speaks of experiencing quite a buzz inside as if her mind is open to what is this she's searching for. And yet she recognises its almost as if it must be finished because its dynamic and if its finished if its closed upon its no longer open or able to be worked with.

34) M then reflects on the closing down and how she can close it down, for example after the interview she will close it. She compares this to closing the chakras when you do yoga you close all the chakras down and the solar plexus which is the energy source that your picking up from you particularly close that down because you can be very vulnerable if its open. This is then related to therapy and the client who she hopes will open up which opening up with your whole being with your whole body receiving.

35) M explores how at times our ability to be open can be blocked at times and necessarily you have got to close down at some stage just because you can't always be open. She then questions that and that if you close the chakras down entirely you can't use them, they become redundant like the appendix, that very skill becomes redundant or that way of being.

36) M then notices how her words are very much more person centred and how she is trying to put psychodynamic and object relations theory onto it and also some behavioural.

37) M speaks of Buddhist monks, where she once lived, who do tend to stay open to receiving everything. She wonders where they've developed and maintained their more openness to what's coming and picking up on all signs good and bad whereas we've perhaps in everyday life perhaps closed down on quite a lot of those because they might be vulnerable.

38) M describes a TV programme where monks, who were there were very open and could remain so. Could this be because their environment is protected in the confines of an abbey where they're in a routine every day and know what they're going to do. She sees this paradoxically as very freeing because they know the routine so it becomes the back drop and they don't have to attend to it. They can be contemplative, they can be open to, they can have this wonderful being about them. They don't have to be necessarily rattled by everyday life.

33m) The recognition of moments, in the interview too, when we cannot say anymore and yet Mary experienced this as exciting and an opening up. And yet it mustn't be finished as this would close it down. And yet knowing that you cannot know it leaves an openness and a buzz an aliveness.

34m) What is this opening and closing? The opening is being open with all of your being to whatever is going on and hoping the client will become able to. This opening up leaves us vulnerable so as in the closing of the chakras in yoga they have to be closed down too.

35m) It may not be possible to stay open like this because of our vulnerability and yet she then questions what she has said because if we do not remain open in this way the ability will become redundant although like the appendix its still there.

36m) Person centred ideas seem to have more natural resonance although M wants to apply psychodynamic or object relations and behavioural. This seems to infer a search for the words for something otherwise indefinable.

37m) M continues to question her previous idea that we cannot stay open and the conditions necessary for this which in everyday life are lost. This takes her to the idea that that perhaps we're closing and opening all the time.

38m) M continues exploring the idea of opening and closing through the story of monks who do not have to worry about routine things. The contingencies have to be allowed to remain in the background, we need to not be too taken up with them in order to remain contemplative.
39) M links this with her and a day when in the middle of her day or the time she has a break she would phone home and pick up messages if clients have cancelled. One day and I picked up a message to say one of her friends had died and it was an immediate shock. She then went into a counselling session and was able to close it down completely and stay with the client without it intruding. She could keep open whatever and close down that, so she thinks there must be mechanisms for doing that and then afterwards when she had contained the whole afternoon's counselling she was going to give herself that space to pick up on her own feelings.

40) M then queries the researchers word mechanism, which was her own word used earlier. She goes back to the research wondering whether you have the mechanisms for closing down or not, or opening up at a later stage.

41) M says she doesn't know, she's processing and says all of a sudden she has a block. She starts to ask a series of questions: why, how do you close down to one, do you have to close down to something known in order to be open to the unknown and is it an on off switch? She then questions whether she has model in mind as she is doing therapy, as a guide, but then bringing it to the forefront (.) is that what she does, is it at different levels are they the Gestalt back and forth foreground and background are they or is it all working? (researcher: And I was wondering I don't know if this is ok but I was also wondering what blocked you then and I was just intrigued by that (1.) something sort of blocked your thought and I wondered whether it was my question or or my?) M then acknowledges that it was that because the feelings went and she went very much into the head.

42) Having acknowledged he researcher's question about a switch M says it switched off the feeling which has gone and perhaps it was getting into the unknown and we were afraid of it.

43) In exploring the fear M thinks it could be when you can't put something concrete on it or you can't put it into your own frame of reference. She links this to the idea of something is really out there like the universe. There are the planets but there are also black holes that are totally unknown.

39m) The way our own feelings or personal contingencies can be held in check, or closed in order to remain open to the other.

40m) The word mechanism seems to throw M and she tries to take it back to the research and the researcher but goes back to wondering whether we have mechanisms for opening and closing.

41m) Suddenly there seemed to be a tangle or knot. Is it the researcher's input? First Mary attempts to link the ideas to the research and then the researcher picks this up and raises the question of the unknown. Then Mary asks a series of questions which lead to more and more of a tangle. It becomes unclear whose knot it is. Is it the relationship and she agrees that it is the question but perhaps it was a mixture of the researcher's questions and her own idea of an on/off mechanism coming back.

42m) The word switch, led to a closing down a switching off of feelings and perhaps something was switched between us? Mary then acknowledges the fear of getting into the unknown.

43m) The fear appears when you do not have something concrete such as a theory or an experience. The planets and a black hole are used as a metaphor for knowing and the unknown.
44) M then explore how black holes are known mathematically in figures on a blackboard or a white board with black or a blackboard with white. But you cannot know unless you’ve been sitting on a star when it collapses and it falls into a black hole and you fall through the other side to what, its unknown that’s scary. Like you cannot be there in a black hole your mind can’t go in on itself collapsing on itself sufficiently to know.

45) M then explores why call it black how do they know its black and going from that to the minutiae of an atom and what does it look like? We know there are atoms but what does it look like? She then speaks of the unknown and Stephen Hawkins who developed the big bang theme by reversing this and the singularity by reversing time time is something that we know we’ve got clocks, and twenty four hours and three hundred and sixty five days a year except every fourth. These are things that are known The Ides of March, they’re all calculated January, February time. He developed his theory of the big bang the reverse almost of black holes of the start of the universe and then he knows that, but he doesn’t know that because he hasn’t experienced it.

46) M describes how one of Stephen Hawkins’ colleagues or one of the professors there recognised that there should be some excess radiation around and then two people received the Nobel Prize for taping this radiation so here’s something concrete to prove that that’s what it is - its because there’s no concreteness I think.

47) M speaks of the big bang as a one of those eureka moments and yet he knows theoretically because he can put it down in those funny lines all those funny things they use to put it down. He knows that if it goes one way it can possibly go the other way and he knows that he has evidence to suggest that his theory is right because some one else in another form of research has actually taped this excess radiation from the big bang. But he’ll never know whether there was a big bang, well he wasn’t there or was he? Is it if its in his collective unconscious (12.)

48) M then speaks of people who live in the tropics who never see snow so until they stand in the snow and know what it is that’s the knowing bit, they might see it in a book or they might see on some programme, this is snow and its white but until they stand in that

44m) The black hole continues as a metaphor for the need to have our own experience in order to know, but something remains unknown if we haven’t experienced it. Like a black hole there are things our mind cannot know

45m) M shows how there is a great deal that we know, that we can calculate but we don’t know it because we haven’t experienced it. We don’t know it through our own being.

46m) Takes the black hole metaphor further in terms of knowing through concrete evidence which is prized but we can never say we know, even if we’ve got it taped! And perhaps refers back to something that has no concreteness.

47m) There is one kind of knowing that suggests, that is inference but this is not the same as being there. Even this is in doubt because perhaps we were there. And then in that moment of doubt the concept of collective unconscious appears.

48m) In reading a book M acknowledges that we know something but its not until we stand in the snow that we know in the sense of just knowing. Again we need the experience.
snow and feel what its like the coldness of it they never know it. You need to feel the coldness using your senses.

49) M acknowledges that you’re using your senses looking at a picture although you’re probably not using all of your sense. She then thinks the unknown is in the sixth sense whatever that sixth sense is in which case its not unknown

50) M then speaks of a double bind here, coming up and asks is anything unknown? She is then having difficulty with the concept of unknown and known because if you’re searching for something that’s unknown then its not unknown because you know that what you’re searching for is the unknown? She highlights the way that we’re looking at it because we’re looking at it from either ends of the spectrum by putting un to known you’re making it the antithesis.

51) M states the unknown doesn’t exist because if you’re searching for it, its just not known in its form until you’ve found it

49m) In reading a book we are not using all our senses, especially the sixth sense which is unknown but she is ambivalent about this as its not unknown.

50m) The question of the unknown, does the unknown exist? If you are searching for something then it’s not unknown because you know what you are searching for. It cannot exist or have a form until its found. In phrasing the unknown there is setting up of the thesis, anti thesis and synthesis which limits it because we only look at it from one end or the other. Then M introduces the idea of the anti synthesis as something that doesn’t exist, that resists conceptualisation.

51m) The unknown doesn’t exist, it has no form until its found.
6.2.1 Individual portrait

Martha:

At the beginning I am aware of my own need for structure and a sense that this will be important. I question what and where is unknown, where can I locate it. It links to ideas such as the unknown in Johari window or unknown in the conscious or simultaneously known somewhere else such as the subconscious, but then I wonder is it unknown? What is unknown about clients? Firstly there is what they bring and secondly the outcome which becomes a way of placing a structure when you do not really know the ending. This structure differs however with different theoretical orientations, something I keep returning to, I think this is the fear of getting into the unknown. The fear appears when you do not have something concrete such as a theory or an experience.

I feel the tension between deciding whether to search for or accept the unknown. Whilst the unknown has a lot of aspects death is one and how we are around death as the unknown. The real struggle, throughout stages in life is whether we can then come to accept it. I had wondered about what it would be like to go through death as a child and in my twenties and thirties. But we cannot know death subjectively or cope with non existence, it is unknown. I recognise here my need to reach for the theory at that moment of recognising a separation between concepts known and unknown. Here the unknown, resists being synthesised or incorporated because its nothing. Theory is a way of holding things together but the anti synthesis doesn’t exist, so does the unknown exist?

I think the English language cannot convey the difference between known and unknown whereas other languages have different words for the opposites. The difference lies elsewhere than a dialectic between knowing or unknowing, for example to know something and to know some one. The knowing that is, just knowing compared to the knowing that is learned from being taught. The just knowing is intuitive from your very being. How do we know this kind of intuitive knowing. It could be expressed as the collective unconscious and unconsciously, it could be developed or it could be spiritual and all pervading but actually it appears to defy language. Language can, however, get in the way of this intuitive experience and communication and perhaps the development of language has superseded intuition. This intuitive experiencing is both already there and developed more in counselling. It doesn’t mean using criteria to notice something or attach theoretical/medical knowing too quickly but does mean working appropriately as a result. I am unsure, this may not be right either. This intuitive way of working connects with feelings and physically with the solar plexus, the heart and the gut.

I have developed this intuition, which seems to be something that is acquired over time in the sense of being able to use it and knowing when to contain it, as not use it. How we learn this intuitive communication seems to come from modelling it in a relationship which is not necessarily counselling or training. Learning is linked to exposure but this is not the same as the behavioural ideas on learning as this intuitive experience is not acquired by learning because it is already there and learning is about developing what’s already there. I think of the mother daughter relationship as a dance where the mother has to learn to learn what the baby needs so that she can help the baby to learn. This is especially important in the beginning. Some one needs to be willing to hear the other first and the mother/therapist needs to attempt to recognise what the other is trying to communicate, especially about feelings and then verbalise this. So the therapist reinvests this learning into the relationship in the service of the client. Neither knows what it is they need to learn until they are on the journey. My own learning has come from my mother’s ability to communicate and pick up on people and their feelings and I don’t know how this developed. The ability to intuit peoples’ feelings is positive but also scary which may be why some people close it down. The experience of speaking of death is a way of facing that aspect of the unknown which also illustrates the kind of relationship that helps with other unknown kinds of experience. The speaking of it helps us face the scariness.

In my own learning to be a therapist at the beginning I could draw on un named experience which seems not to be definable, unknown, but perhaps links to the spontaneous intuitive relating. At the
beginning this would be spontaneous and unbounded but this gets lost a little in the middle part of training because the theory leaves less room for it, at least for a while. Then I became able to hold both the theory or knowing and the unknown/unknowing although I cannot put into words how this happened.

So something is there and can be observed but there is something elsewhere, otherwise, up there spiritual and yet its very embedded in here (pointing to her solar plexus). Again I want a theory. In the interview too there are moments when we cannot say anymore and yet I experience that as exciting and an opening up. And yet it mustn’t be finished as this would close it down. Knowing that you cannot know it leaves openness and a buzz, aliveness. What is this opening and closing? The opening is being open with all of your being to whatever is going on and hoping the client will become able to. This opening up leaves us vulnerable so as in the closing of the chakras in yoga they have to be closed down too. It may not be possible to stay open like this because of our vulnerability and yet if we do not remain open in this way the ability will become redundant although like the appendix its still there. I wonder whether its correct that we cannot stay open and whether the conditions necessary for this are lost in everyday life. Perhaps we’re closing and opening all the time. Our feelings or the contingencies of life can be held in check, or closed in order to remain open to the other.

We need to have our own experience in order to know, but something remains unknown if we haven’t experienced it. Like a black hole there are things our mind cannot know. There is a great deal that we know, that we can calculate but we don’t know it because we haven’t experienced it. We don’t know it through our own being. There is one kind of knowing that suggests, that is inference, but this is not the same as being there. I read a book that acknowledges that we know something but its not until we stand in the snow that we know in the sense of just knowing. Again we need the experience. In reading a book we are not using all our senses. The unknown is in the sixth sense in which case its not unknown. There is then a double bind, a question of the unknown, does the unknown exist? If you are searching for something then its not unknown because you know what you are searching for. It cannot exist or have a form until its found. In phrasing the unknown there is setting up of the thesis, anti thesis and synthesis which limits it because we only look at it from one end or the other. The anti synthesis is something that doesn’t exist, the unknown doesn’t exist, it has no form until its found.

6.3 Structure of the Phenomenon “How do Psychotherapists Learn about The Unknown?”

The data analysis undertaken in stages one to four was helpful in familiarising the researcher with the data and experienced as a gradual immersion in the data enabling the general descriptive structure to emerge. The general description of the structure of the phenomenon was undertaken by moving away from individual life worlds, summarising themes and drawing on the researcher’s reveries commenced during the previous stages of data analysis. This process is said by Wertz (1985) to involve “empathic immersement,” “slowing down and dwelling,” “magnification and amplification of the situation,” “suspension of belief and employment of intense interest” and shifting “from objects to their meaning”. It was difficult to separate out such processes and the researcher felt it was more like allowing oneself to be lost in
thought about the data. At a more pragmatic level each of the salient features and meanings of stage three were reviewed so that gradually a number of key themes began to emerge. Each meaning unit was then cut and pasted into these themes until the process was complete for all ten participants. Many meaning units were seen to belong to more than one theme and were accordingly included more than once.

During this stage Giorgi's (Eckarsberg 1998:43) second question for explicating the data was utilised in terms of the research question "how do psychotherapists learn about the unknown". This was: how did learning about the unknown take place? Asking this question opened up the researcher to all kinds of phenomena that hindered or helped learning which included, for example, the participants own attitudes and values. The difficulty with the phenomenon, the unknown, is that most of what people spoke of was not clearly or directly related to the research question. Indeed participants frequently checked out whether they were answering the question.

During this stage of the data analysis the researcher drew on the ideas related to reverie that were present in one particular interview where it was suggested to the participant not to worry about the initial question which seemed to lead to a freeing up as follows:

M: I've thought about it for days since I agreed to do this and I thought well I haven't, how can you talk about the unknown? I know that you can but how can I talk about the unknown. I think its very very difficult and I wish I could because I feel that would mean I'd grasped the unknown but can you grasp the unknown? Please tell me how if you can [with irony].

I: I can see from the look on your face [smiling] you know that isn't possible

M: Yes I know that's not possible

I: I suppose it feels like, I don't know about you, but it feels like it could be quite a pressure here now to have to try to kind of answer these questions rather than maybe just forget the questions for the moment and maybe not focus on them too much

M: But where does that take us, where does that take you if we're not focussed on the question? I'm struggling to think how one can talk about the question without addressing the question, the question being what do I know about the unknown or do I know about the unknown? I mean I do know about the unknown. I mean I sat here for half an hour waiting to see whether the Olympic bid was going to London or not. A very big unknown for me was just whether, how sick was I gonna feel if they didn't get it and of course I still don't know that because of course they got it and that's how many things in ones life can be like that.

From this the participant Martha went on to speak of how in practice patients can be disappointed with us when they go away not knowing. This is where reverie as not trying to focus on the question but rather seeing what comes to mind was helpful to
the researcher in explicating the data. It has to be acknowledged, however, that whilst Wertz (1985) sets out another four procedures explaining the researcher’s presence to the data in formulating the general structure of the phenomenon, albeit pointing out that they are a “syncretic blend,” the processes involved in explicating the general structure of the phenomenon seemed themselves to be largely unknown and confusing. The researcher found this to be a more mysterious process raising further questions about how we engage with data in order to understand it and present it to others. Another unknown emerges as the researcher’s unknowing of their own learning process. Despite this difficulty seven major themes gradually emerged and these were: “The unknown from the known,” “The unknown from training,” “The unknown from personal therapy and supervision,” “The unknown in practice,” “Life and living,” “The spiritual/mystical unknown” and “Fear of death”. Each theme is presented along with quotations from the participants in order to illustrate something of the variety of experiences within each theme.

6.3.1 The unknown from the known

The idea of something unknown

When we begin to wonder about the unknown theories in themselves can introduce us to the idea of something unknown and help us to locate the unknown as part of us in for example a concept such as the Johari Window (eg Luft 1969) or the unconscious.

Sara: I was thinking what is the unknown cause if it’s the unknown you don’t know, it’s the unknown. In a way its like Johari window, there’s one element the quarter that you don’t know because its unknown to you, so when would you pick up what it is .... Unless its unknown in a particular dimension for instance in the conscious, if it was unknown in the conscious but its known somewhere else in the subconscious then is it unknown?

As well as using known concepts perhaps to locate the unknown in oneself theory can help us to locate ourselves in a sea of unknowing where for example Bion’s (for example Bion 1970) idea of “O” introduces us to the extent of our unknowing and for Alan it is a jolt to realise the extent of the unknown. The idea of the unconscious is especially connected with unknowing both as pertaining to something unknown in a relationship and yet is also recognised as only a partial way of explaining the unknown.

Alan: I find a really it a really shocking thing in psychoanalysis. The O makes the unknown seem like a sort of sea surrounding us as though we are living in a capsule, the sea of the unknown.
Alan: I mean I went into this as a student of psychology, really wanting to understand consciousness and sort of believing that maybe consciousness was maybe a biological function that could be explained in terms of physics and chemistry and information processing. And I think the idea of O turns that on its head really and introduces the idea that the kind of science that understands consciousness might not be anything like science as we know it.

Jenny: The unconscious is going to be there in the room for both of you so not knowing, the unknown, is also going to be present for both of you and expectations and anticipations around that unknowing like this interview. What on earth are we going to talk about?

Theory can seem like a place of solidity in the fluidity of unknowing so for example psychoanalytic theory with its concern for history is backward looking and therefore what is known will only be based on past experience offering some reinforcement or stability whereas facing the unknown of the future can just seem overwhelming. For example in order to be able to think about the unknown which does not “have a concrete sense” Sara said she “is relating it to herself in a concrete sense as an experience of a journey into the unknown rather than the unknown as a future”.

Sara: Maybe I’m looking at it as my past, maybe that’s something to do with being psychoanalytic and looking back before I can look forward. I don’t know maybe that’s about looking back in my own history before I can cope with something as big as, you know, what now um and the vastness of that which is huge isn’t really? Maybe that keeps me safe.

Paul on the other hand welcomes the unpredictable using for example an analogy with sub atomic physics to illustrate things which are not visible, measurable or observable and hence affect us in unpredictable ways which means the unknowable requires an other order of thinking which is difficult because people want to know more that is unknown in order to be more predictive. The danger could be seen as fitting people into our theories so that reactions can be predictable rather than unknown or as Paul asks “what might be born out of a situation” or Rachel what might emerge as ways of being?

Paul: My view is that there is a very strong danger that you reduce people to past processes rather than look at perhaps aspects or quality of character of somebody’s nature which often means that they may produce things against the odds or against expectations. And this effects the way we hypothesise and diagnose people because in a way we end up boxing them within our theories and models and then start to work with them as though they fit in with our theories.

Rachel: Knowing is not set in concrete but is friable and mobile and always subject to change. Thus we can never be sure about what we know of our clients and need to remain open to their different ways of being.

Theory helps draw attention to the unknown in our experience so it reminds us to expect experiences such as things that people say that we will not understand. It also
provides a way of coming to understanding but whilst there are things we know about ourselves in relation to other people we can never know what to expect, except the unexpected. Not knowing can also be a relief and in itself something to hold in that sea of unknowing although Mel also introduces it as something to hold when theory becomes too confusing.

Jenny: I think theory highlights it. There is the unconscious, there are things that we just don’t understand and um there are these experiences you can have where you think I knew that was going to happen or I haven’t heard from my friend and she suddenly rings that night, the way that the Freudian slips, the way that we say things. Uh So there’s the theory there’s our own experience of it and there’s our client work as experience of it.

Rachel: Well there are quite obvious things that we do know. I know I’m sitting here and I know you’re sitting there and I know when my clients are in the room and so on. But I don’t know what to expect from them and they don’t know what to expect from me and I don’t know what to expect from me either under those circumstances because that is something that’s um it just happens and anything can come out of it or nothing can come out of it.

Mel: In a strange sort of way, holding on to the idea of the unknown is like holding onto something firm because you can take a particular phenomenon and look at it from different angles or something like that, and you can say this proves so and so or it doesn’t prove it or whatever. I think there’s something about the fact that you can just allow for it not to be known is important.

The question of the unknown is seen as problematic because it cannot be simply learned or understood and therefore is a more philosophical question. Indeed some more philosophical readings were seen to shift the unknown prior to any knowing especially in terms of understanding another person so that ethical relating, for example, might be seen to be more important than knowing or understanding others. These ideas not only permit our unknowing but require it.

Rachel: Levinas and reading about being face to face, and I don’t know where to go with that and being with someone and not knowing who they are but actually being there for them. My responsibility to them and not knowing what that will bring out from my clients and being aware that that is one of the most useful tools you can have.

Phenomenology is an example of a theory that takes the unknown further for example for Paul into the area of the unknowable where an experience resists understanding or even theorising. One area in particular where theories may not be helpful is in the living relationship between therapist and patient where not only is something happening in the relationship but both are moved by the experience but nothing can teach you how to create that moment.

Jenny: Well you can’t do it with theories you know. A relationship is not based on theory. Its based on two people connecting in some way isn’t it and very much in the here and now rather than psychodynamically. You’re linking and identifying patterns in the past.
where you've got the basis of your theory there but then you've got how that person is relating there to you in the room, what's being repeated with you?

Jan: I can't honestly say that I'm doing anything, it's just starting to emerge and of course the temptation is to make it happen and to read about it and have knowledge about it so that you can make it happen ... and learn about it but especially about this you can't.

Theory also helps to show how the unknown can emerge through the known although only in ways that we are already able to constitute it which means that the unknown that becomes known is limited and so will be inexact. Rachel, for example came to understand that because of the way memory is altered along the way we cannot be sure about anything and she learned this from ideas in philosophy which made her stop and think and ask what is knowledge? A way in which the unknown can emerge through the known is in the meeting between experience and theory and returning to ideas again and again finding something unknown each time.

Alan: I mean I'm very much concerned with that with Wilfred Bion as obviously a lot of my colleagues are. He is pretty strong on the unknown and I know what he says about it which is that it evolves into K and he goes to great lengths to say that. K the power of understanding and thought or whatever he means by K or whatever we make of it doesn't reach back into the unknown but that the unknown emerges into it. Which is it's a mystical idea but also phenomenological one because what he means is that we may come to know the unknown but we will only know it in the terms of which we are capable of constructing it, so its always going to be an approximation.

Alan: I actually quite like that from a teacher's point of view that when we return to a theme you bring back to it experience, clinical experience and everything else that you've learnt. And when you look at it again you find much more in it that there's an unknown lurking inside a known.

The unknown is something other so when we reach the limits of theory it can also show there is something otherwise, elsewhere, which cannot be accounted for, or for which there is no established language. Paul for example draws on post modern ideas to question fixed notions of personality theory which views character traits as products of the past saying that "new personalities are born and die every moment and they are not products of the past or fixed and up to a point we can bring them to consciousness." He then proposes that the unknown as unknowable is something else and arises in a situation like a character in a film who against expectations is able to take action which no one could have predicted and which could only exist because of the situation "so we can never fully know who we are".

Jan: Learning about it its something about, for me, moving away from theory and perhaps reading more philosophy and reading more about this and I'm not sure whether that's true or not but for me its something other than theory, you know Freud and Rogers. Its just something different and I know they touch on it and they talk about the unconscious but its even more than the unconscious because the unconscious you can bring it into the known. And that suggests there's something in the unconscious that you
Finding the words

The knowing provided by theories can provide the words for unnamed experiences which help us to clarify them although these theoretical concepts might not themselves be spoken of. Theory is seen as important because we have to strive to put words to our experiences including our experiences of the unknown which connects with the idea that we come into existence in relationship to others. In order to name some unknown experience, which is part of the work in psychotherapy, the therapist first has to undergo the experience and the unknowing that goes with it, in order to then find the words. For example Martha draws on Kleinian (eg Klein 1932) ideas to speak of learning as located in a symbiotic relationship between the mother and baby, and therapist and client. The mother and therapist need to be willing to learn and the therapist has a responsibility to the client not the other way round.

Jenny: Well its like the unconscious which is not spoken about but its there, but appears in the way that the person speaks or makes a connection or in dreams will come up in that. Its like that Aha moment isn’t it. We make a link or they’ve made a link and it suddenly something will slot into place.

In psychotherapy practice there needs to be a lot of wondering, trying to get a sense of what the other is saying and feeling by how we experience it so we can offer it back in some form that will allow the patient to experience something different. Theoretical knowing can help us to know that we do not know yet and so bear that unknowing and for example, Jenny links this with Klein’s (1988) ideas of projective identification where as yet unknown feelings cause too much discomfort. This has to be experienced in order to reintroduce it in a different way.

Jenny: Its almost like we’re experience something with them, isn’t it, to give it back so that they can experience it in a different way this time. So that’s about the not knowing they’re not knowing what it is that they are giving to us or we are picking up or sensing.

The theoretical knowing can also sustain us through the unknown experiences. There are times however when theory can no longer provide the words and Mel explains how she can feel when she is not making a lot of sense and what happens when “we lose a known area which gives confidence, the words disappear and I becomes a gibbering idiot.” In order to try and remain coherent the focus can become the search for all different kinds of ways of explaining an experience. Martha for example considers that person centred ideas seem to have more natural resonance in
terms of being with a patient although she also recognises how she would prefer to apply psychodynamic, object relations or behavioural ideas inferring a search for the words for something otherwise, indefinable.

In fact for Jan putting aside the search as a "desire to" leaves one open to unnameable experiences and in permitting that, some unknown experience in a relationship, becomes possible. However there is a paradox here in that putting aside beliefs and thinking means you can be open to what you do not know but as soon as you express that you start thinking and believing. Jan sees what can happen in a relationship as spiritual and the need to find a way to explain can actually destroy what might be a valuable experience. In other words, it is not always necessary to find the words. Sometimes however having been lost for words we become able to find our own words and as Jenny put it she found her own voice in the midst of unknowing in her own therapy. Hope in the future is seen to emerge more from the unknowable than from the anxiety of understanding.

Jan: When nothing else, there's no thinking, no understanding there's no desire to, it reaches part of me that is just there which is I spose Rogers would say the core self. And there's a lot of talk about whether its spiritual or mystic all that kind of stuff um. For me it is in some kind of way I mean I've experienced it with clients, I have to say. Nor very often but when I have experienced it with a client its been fleeting. That that, it seems to be a very short period of time that being in that place whatever you call it is very short but then what comes out of it seems very a deeper understanding a closeness with the other.

Whilst theory can provide the words for and sustain us through some unnameable experience, experience can also help us make sense of theory which we may have read but did not initially understand or have not understood for many years. For example Mel illustrates the linking of theory and experience in practice with the experience of reading a paper where the ideas resonated with her.

Mel: Again I'm thinking of something I've read by Donald Meltzer when he's talking about claustrum and he wrote in his book that he was going to describe what he felt this was but unless you'd experienced it would probably sound like a load of rubbish because its all in the counter transference. And he wrote a description of being with a particular type of patient and some of that sort of registered with me and I thought Oh yes and that happened to me.

In another example she speaks of not initially making sense of a paper but later when working with a patient the ideas came back to her.

Mel: In reading other things, like Michael Fordham has written a seminal paper called 'defences of the self', which when I first read it I thought I don't know what this is about. Um this is a really difficult paper and having worked with this training patient and gone
back to it I think, oh that’s what he’s talking about that’s that experience. So I think its that process of people writing about their experiences is terribly important.

In fact theory can lead us to question our experience just as comparing our experience with theory can lead us to question theoretical knowledge. Theoretical ideas can help us to question some taken for granted assumptions that we may not otherwise have noticed because theories do draw attention albeit in different ways to the unknown. For example the idea of free association helped Alan to identify something that was unknown to him as his assumption that patients knew perfectly well, as they freely associated, what they meant. It seemed so obvious to him how different associations fitted together. Then because he knew that a principle of free association was that the patient does not know the links between his associations, at least at a conscious level, he became able to question his own unknown motives for thinking this.

Alan: And I had the idea that they were feeding me with easy material to reassure me as a psychotherapist which was after all what I wanted. I wanted to be reassured by material that made sense to me, I needed it very badly um why I thought they thought I needed it I don’t know.

The meeting of theory and experience and the relationship between therapist and patient are not the only juncture where discrepancies or unknowns can be found. Learning about more than one theory can provide a comparison which then highlights differences and limitations of individual theories and shows you that certain theories do not hold in some situations or no theory is generalizable to every experience. Taken collectively theories did not present a unified view of the world. Studying different approaches also helps recognise that things look one way from one perspective and different from another. Something remains unknown because of the uniqueness of the situation or a theory cannot know everything about everything.

Kevin: How did I come to know? Well its partly I suppose a degree of intellectual luck in that I had the chance to see the discrepancies between theology and sociology and education and English and psychology and that luck, and also because I’m good at taking up opportunities.

Dave: So psychoanalytic theory would be the map and actually working with somebody would be the territory. Um or you know my own experience when my own experience does not match the theory then I’m gonna question it in some way and if that keeps happening I will maybe chuck the map away.

Although Dave also points out that theories once learned may still influence us in unrecognised or unknown ways “Even theories that you ditch influence you and you cannot get rid of them”.
At times all the different theories also add to our confusion especially when having tried them all none really seems to fit or the ones you would prefer do not fit. So as when Martha attempts to explain the importance of remaining open to experience so the ability to be that way doesn’t become redundant. She realised that she can rely on all kinds of theories might which close one down to these experiences. Whilst an experience might in one sense be explained by all kinds of theories it is also none of them because the words just cannot match the experience. It is important to see that theories are pictures albeit drawn with words without being the actual territory of practice, there will always be things one does not know about a situation. For Mel the teaching of theory requires integrity as well as a degree of belief in what is being taught.

Mel: I think its that process of people writing about their experiences is terribly important and its how we approach the theory. Its then whether we think about that as, this is how it is the picture of the world or whether we think of it as well this is a way of describing an experience and its an experience that can quite often happen and we collect it under these headings. Um so I think coming back to your question about training I think it depends on how its taught really it depends on how the theory is presented really whether its presented as gospel or not really um.

On the other hand not everything is unknown and there has to be an encounter between them.

Mel: I think that’s the sort of paradox of, isn’t it? That there’s both there really. I think there has to be both. I think that’s where my fear of the rather new age hippy type thing comes in where you just say oh well its all unknown and there we go sort of thing we have to do this struggling sort of thing as well.

There are times, especially when words fail, when we are caught between paradoxical ideas that we have no structure to support our knowing or when something cannot be reduced to one thing or another that we reach for the words. These moments open the possibility of questioning the impact of our own process if we are able to wonder why we need to reach for the words that theory provides. Such questioning can also be a creative moment when we find a new way to describe something such as Martha’s idea of the anti synthesis as something that doesn’t exist and which cannot then be incorporated.

Martha: I’m doing that trying to theorise again or because its kept as if it feels as if its separate there’s the known and there’s the unknown ......... Well something is black something is white so there’s the thesis and antithesis and to bring it together there’s the synthesis but if something is neither black nor white then its an anti synthesis almost its, its, it isn’t combined its not it doesn’t exist. So does the unknown exist?
Learning about the unknown comes from a different way with words such as a throw away remark or an unexpected comment or as for Jan from the written arts which open up a different way of thinking.

Jan: Well of course learning theory for me was finding answers and of course we turn to theory to help us in understanding what’s going on and what the possibilities are here and all the rest of it. Um but its yeah I think I mean learn in a different way and I think that is kind of opening up things like. And I don’t know because I haven’t really started exploring it but things like theatre, poems, reading different material that’s maybe even autobiographies of people um just to be able to read something like that without having to understand it, but just accept that’s what their lives were like.

When theory hinders learning about the unknown

Learning about the unknown can come from knowing theories although forms of knowing and understanding can also close the unknown of an experience down. When we fail to recognise that theory cannot complete the picture of the world and what it is like to live in it we can close ourselves off from relationship with the other. We are then unable to learn from the experience of a live encounter. Authentic relating in particular is difficult and we can prefer to protect ourselves from experience of life and living and for example Kevin saw watching television as a drug, a way of anaesthetising ourselves, and theory can have the same role. All kinds of theory can become a religion and have this effect of trying to make the unknown known which Kevin sees as “a huge defence against unknowing” a way to feel held rather than face that we do not know. For Dave it can lead therapists to think there is something going on when actually their claim to knowledge, “as the delusion of knowing,” gets in the way of the living authentic encounter.

Kevin: I don’t know anything about the unknown but I would imagine that there’s something about, I mean I can’t swim either but its something like jumping off the edge of the sea, jumping off the edge of the pool and going to the bottom of the person. Um I think that’s all we can do really you know. I love CBT, I love psychodynamic, I love aspects of person centred and Gestalt, but that’s all tosh really for me. Um, if you take it like a religion. For me its something like bearing pain with people and even feeling pain with people, its not about getting that suit of armour so that you don’t have to.

In a relationship theory can inure one to difference, as the unique irreducible other. For example Jan points out that theory can stop you really hearing and seeing what the other person is saying and who they are and in fact words cannot describe the living encounter which for her “is to do with love, pure and simple not complicated or theorised, being rather than doing yet we always want to find words which interrupt it.” In fact she has found that reading less theory since her last training has opened
her up to not knowing in a situation rather than what she already knows about. Likewise Martha felt that intuitive or spontaneous relating became lost for a while because of the way theory takes up more room.

Jan: You can get so blinkered in this work, you know, you’ve got the theory there and you have a client and they say this and that and you’ve got this history and you kind of fit them into this theory. Um it doesn’t really matter which one you choose really cause you can always fit it to some theory.

Jan: Mm something of the person’s differences to me and different to anybody and just unique and not having to fit them into some theory cause I think that. And I’ve always thought that funny how we come down to basics again now how theory can stop something.

Martha: I used it a lot more in the beginning in a way that that was unbounded. It was spontaneous. I probably left a, lost it a little bit in the middle part of it when you start to put theory to um things that you do. I now integrate them both, I can work with both and I might have theory going through my head or I might not have anything going through my head half the time.

Gradually though something seems to happen that enables room for both knowing and unknowing, experience and theory come to work together or are integrated although explaining how this happens is beyond words.

Theory can also give us the idea or at least reinforce the notion that we are supposed to understand and know instead of helping us recognise the limitations of knowing. The position of knowing requires a great deal of effort to challenge especially as patients often also want us to know and the struggle can become a search for the power of the word. In turn we can end up talking about theory which prevents us working with the meaning that a patient attaches to their experience which might open up new learning at least as a different way of understanding the world instead of incorporating the other into our theoretical world. Theory can then have the effect of inferring that we know better than the client what their experience means, the name represents power. For Kevin the impact is seen as deathly in that both patient and therapist then absent themselves from relating.

Alan: I’ve had a long struggle with him [supervisor]. Two or three years to push back at the idea that I’m supposed to understand what the patient means, to push back to the idea that actually I’m supposed to ask him what he means which has been very helpful but is quite an uncomfortable process.

Kevin: I was caught in, I’m supposed to know this but obviously I don’t know it well enough and I kept going to my supervision and in a sense it got me into being a proxy counsellor and him into being a proxy client. And the whole thing lacking authenticity because we were supposed to know.

In fact Kevin sees obeisance to theory as failing to address despair and in the process adding to the patient’s despair.
Kevin: I think as it was, I think I deepened his despair cause I appeared to know and he appeared to not be able to understand what I knew.

Knowing can also be a way of hiding our not knowing which infers that not knowing is something which has to be hidden.

Sara: I wonder if we have to assume we do [know] otherwise we don't know. Well a lot of what we think we know we've been told we know it anyway, we're told what that is, that is black or that is white.

Sara feels this is in part connected with intolerance of uncertainty in particular that we do not know whether knowing is the same from one person to another. Knowing in the form of having a theory to hold can be a way of not allowing learning from our own experiences, especially from the painfulness of ignorance or unknowing and then it can be something to grab or hold. The pain of ignorance or unknowing appears to be linked to a narcissistic wounding and something we can feel ashamed of. Of his own arrogance Alan says that learning about things intellectually didn't make him feel the pain of ignorance or help him to think about technique so therefore he could go right on thinking he knew it all already, "my arrogance was completely immune to the evidence of my ignorance".

It is possible to come to learn that a place to begin a relationship with another is from the point of view of not knowing and yet beginnings can instil panic and the need for something to hold, the reassurance that there is something there. Beginnings can be a time when our unknowing is more noticeable, for example that each person does not know the other, there is something other than what a concept such as the unconscious account for. Similarly the beginning of the research interview and thinking about the unknown provoked panic and a desire to grab at something by thinking of theory. However beginnings can also be a time when we think we know what we are going to know especially when we start from our theory and Alan for example came to realise that neither the scientific preference for standing outside and observing nor the psychoanalytic claim to know what the other means could replace the struggle of recognising you do not know.

Jenny: The unconscious is going to be there in the room for both of you so not knowing, the unknown is also going to be present for both of you um and expectations and anticipations around that unknowing like this interview. What on earth are we going to talk about not the knowing and the unknowing and what are you basing it on and where are we starting from. My anxiety is I'm not sure what you're looking for and I'm not sure if I've got the answers.
Alan: I think is what really counts and I think of how many sessions begin for me with a very clueless feeling and with that a very inadequate feeling that I'm supposed to understand and I don't.

On the other hand unknowing can become another theory that we have to show we know, even the unknown can be reduced to the known.

Kevin: Conceptually I would have said, ten or twenty thirty years ago, of course I don't know but it wouldn't have been the same, it wouldn't have been, would have been like a defence like I'm sposed to say.

Alan: I suppose for me its in a way it's a matter of pride to say well yes of course I'm open to the unknown you know. I have a revolution every day really but it you see....

Whilst theory plays a role in learning about the unknown the continual questioning of it emerges as beyond simply acquiring facts. Another kind of implicit learning which implicates experience has to occur and through experiences that challenge received wisdom the unknowable, according to Paul "helps us realise that much of what we know is more what we believe as in the idea that the sun went round the earth. Even things that are known need to be held lightly." Eventually you come to realise that the more you learn the less you know or as Rachel says "at my great age I am glad to be taught to suck eggs!"

6.3.2 The unknown from training

The course of training

At the beginning of training there is a sense of adventure and hope, a combination of hoping training will help in some way with our own problems and also that it will provide the knowledge and know how to apply in practice where some kind of outcome can be predicted.

Dave: I suppose that you hope in the early stages of things that training is going to equip, or I hoped train and equip me with some, something that I knew which I could then apply in a way which would have maybe semi predictable outcomes or something like that. Um and I suppose what I found was that um that is very partially true but there are great big holes and areas in which it isn't true.

Sara: I'd have dreams of escaping there was a huge part of me that wanted to be there and it was only when I went to [training organisation] that was an enormous adventure for me in many ways. Emotional and intellectually and therapy was a requirement of the course that at first a bit grudgingly and then I embraced it quite wholeheartedly um and I think that gave to me the strength to do something about my personal situation.

Training can foster hope and disillusion, create the certainty of one's own position or permit uncertainty. It is, however, possible to create a balance between, being too
certain or too sceptical, which might be another form of certainty, and the reinforcing of our own position compared with learning that there is no certainty. However sometimes training just confirms our own world view which raises a question about not just noticing what it is that lures us into training to be a psychotherapist but also examining our motives. Drawing attention to the way knowing does not match experience, learning to be more critical and recognising the ways in which learning only one school of thought can leave us thinking our map is the only one or the right one are helpful in casting doubt.

Dave: Well it’s a like a balance between, you know, fostering hope and knowledge on the one hand and creating some scepticism about it on the other something like that. No it not completely disillusioning people, I don’t thing that’s very kind it’s a but that does come into it and I suppose earlier on, the situation has changed a lot now in psychotherapy training, but when I first started out I mean it was full of certainties This is what you do, this is how you do it and that other lot over there don’t know what they’re talking about, you know, I think the other lot are charlatans.

Sara: Well mostly through experience and just being alive I suppose and experiences have happened and I suppose people you meet and people and you. There’s well how does anyone know really? How can you know other people, maybe through supervision, maybe through therapy mm. I do think having a sense of where you came from and your own personal history helps you to cope with the unknown. I think it feels like this enormous..... Well maybe the fact that I believed that anyway before I went to do my training and that has just reinforced that sense of importance mm.

Training can open our eyes to all kinds of inconsistencies or turn a blind eye to them so whereas for Sara learning about psychodynamic ideas verified her own world view as an interest in peoples’ histories for Rachel it opened her eyes to the fact that none of us know and we cannot know what is going on with our patients who constantly surprise. In fact she found that psychodynamic ideas in training opened up the idea that the story of our lives is not so certain and her subsequent training opened up the unknown from beginning to end which led her to begin questioning herself.

Rachel: My initial training in psychotherapy was very much um psychodynamic and I still think in some ways psycho dynamically cause as I said just now I do feel that we, our clients, ourselves, everybody picks up things all the way along through their lives from people they know from their parents their carers and so on. But and that they become those people, that we become that person but we can’t know that. Because our clients quite possibly tell us a story about their lives which may be true but might not be and I feel that’s unknown. I think even what I say about myself and my past sometimes isn’t and I think was it really like that? Do I know? So maybe its quite a good feeling to feel that um it opens things up if you don’t know if you’re not set in concrete.

Rachel: In that training, well there was just so much, It was so full and so awful and yet so wonderful and I mean I am talking about the post grad course and the day one of not knowing and whatever the last day was still not knowing and yet knowing an awful lot.
Somewhere along the way there is a discovery that psychotherapeutic practice, at least in part, depends on the capacity to tolerate not knowing. The hope associated with knowing can continue to manifest through additional trainings until according to Dave we eventually discover “that each one doesn’t equip you to know in the real situation and as a result you become disillusioned”. So studying different approaches in training can be a way to learn in the sense of realising all kinds of limitations inherent in learning theory but problems are created where in training the ideas are taught as if they are the whole story, as a kind of faith which supports the hope. A repetitive process highlights how what is known continually changes in the light of other ideas and experiences. Thus knowing is never complete.

Dave: I s’pose I would regard my professional journey as something like um hope followed by disillusion several times over. Um followed by a recognition that actually it was not unreasonable that all these were incomplete and partial explanations.

Training is like a journey which can be a planned course in all ways or can allow room for the contingencies of the situation and recognise that the route cannot be predicted although the current climate in higher education can leave little room for the highways and bye ways. Making room for transgressing from a curriculum is seen as creating a space where the things people really want to know can emerge and also where learning from experience can come to life, which mirrors what therapy is about. Training can allow learning from experience through everyday occurrences, stories, books, films and travel which might open up imagination and thoughtfulness rather than mere understanding. In fact for Jan learning about the unknown comes in a different way to understanding and whilst it is difficult to explain how this happens she thinks that music and poetry create an opening to not understanding.

Dave: Well you see that I think that’s interesting, therapy as far as I’m concerned is a bit about, a lot about helping somebody else to become more open to experiencing, you see. Well if you know where you are going and you know exactly how you’re gonna get there I don’t think that’s very conducive to learning about or learning to become more open to experiencing.... So I’m being very existential in the sense of being very open to the moment. Well you can’t know, unless you’ve got it all nailed down and some people love to have it all nailed down. Well I mean, you know I noticed, well its difficult these days because we’re in a climate of nailing everything down.

Paul: I don’t like overly set curricula. I don’t believe in them, you know, some of the trainers I see they want, you know, what am I sposed to cover? You get ten minutes for this and fifteen minutes for that. I don’t like working in that way because I think it um it stops the interesting highways and bye ways where people do their real learning. I’m much more interested in this sort of training um that people come out with some imagination and depth, with instinct for something rather than them having pursued a formal sort of curriculum.
Training can open up or close down a form of learning connected with intuition and wisdom, which is seen as different to understanding, being more related to the unknown and unknowing and where being immersed in various situations can enable more embodied learning. These different situations include being in group, practice, personal therapy and just living. In one sense this intuitive unknowing and how it is learned defies or may be destroyed by language or the development of language may have superseded intuition. In another sense it is connected to the kind of learning that comes from our very being in the world with others as opposed to being taught and for Martha it is pervasive and difficult to locate. Whilst this elusive form of learning related to intuition is invisible it can be communicated, although how is unknown, perhaps as senses or feelings, and it is only brought to light in a certain set of circumstances. For Martha it is acquired over time within a relationship which does not necessarily have to come from counselling or training. It is more than just not knowing what you know but the knowing does not exist until the situation occurs and according to Dave may leave you asking “well how did I do that?”

Dave: I mean I’d say that quite often therapists will talk about the use of intuition. Well there are different ideas about what intuition is. Well is it something that well you know you possess or does it come from outside oneself? Or I mean I s’pose the way I tend to think about intuition is that its something that arises into consciousness out of a store of knowledge and experience um that you don’t necessarily know you’ve got. Do you see what I mean? Until the situation triggers it.

Learning to respond as a therapist in a way that is connected to the situation and the other person is problematic when we become disconnected from our own experience and Paul gives the example of when some one has been ill after eating in a restaurant and afterwards they say there was something funny about the food. This disconnection can happen because we are taught not to trust unsupported experiences which could be experiences which are not supported by theory, research or observable criteria. At some point in training or perhaps afterwards this responsiveness comes from knowing when to let go of the rules which requires trust in our own experiencing.

Paul: One problem though is that people are also disconnected from observation, from their experience. I’ve learned not to disregard the slight inconsistencies of fit with how things look and with what my perception, my concept of that person. So out of that I came to a view at a certain point, I don’t know if it was a certain point, I came to a gradual view that things are probably more unpredictable than we give them credit for. Hence they’re more unknowable than we give them credit for.

Sometimes training, in particular learning theory, hinders the intuitive. For Martha it is perhaps already present but sometimes forgotten whereas for her it was something
she had learned to trust because of experiences with her mother where senses and feelings were acknowledged and checked out.

Learning from others

A major factor that influences learning in the training environment is less concerned with what is taught and more with who teaches and how they are rather than what Paul calls formal teaching. This means that it is the unplanned things that are said in the moment rather than planned that has helped him learn about the unknown. Experiencing what it is like for a situation to become chaotic and still be able to think is enlivening and a learning situation in the sense of being with a teacher who models that. Martha differentiates this kind of modelling or vicarious learning from a behavioural model because she feels it is otherwise than external, observable behaviour and more about learning in a relationship where both have to be willing to learn.

Dave: With only some pre planning done it could be very lively and very exciting, interesting, engaging or it could be a bloody shambles, you know. But I think that my experience is that often enough I'm functioning well enough to deal with the emerging demands of the moment to be able to risk it.

Even the teaching of theory can take on a different and more personal or relational hue where the subject is not taught as gospel but rather is lived in the teaching which has integrity and belief. Mel sees this as more to do with how teachers are in the world, their presence as connecting to the unknown which has a spiritual element. Paradoxically a totalising kind of belief which can leave no room for doubt in the teacher, who believes they have something to teach, can do likewise for the learner and as in Alan's experience it had to be a major change in his life that challenged that infallible belief in his own gift.

Mel: About training, I think it depends on how its taught really it depends on how the theory is presented really whether its presented as gospel or not really um so I think it is possible to in a paradoxical way begin that process of people um thinking about or having experiences that are about the unknown um through teaching. But its not about teaching facts really its about um experience again really. And it comes back to that living it and being it sort of thing. I think when you teach you have to be uh there’s a sort of integrity that’s required it isn’t there? Um a belief in what you’re teaching..... I think my experience of the best teachers is where you get that feeling. I think that’s, I was thinking in terms of the seminar last night the person giving the seminar. You had a feeling there was something quite profound in her um belief uh she said very little really but there was something about what she, the way she presented that spoke volumes really.

Alan: I’ve been extremely tolerant of the conviction of my teachers that they have something to teach me. And even though what I found exciting about my training was that I learned a whole lot of new theory that I had no idea existed, but in spite of the fact
that there were a lot of ideas that I didn’t know I didn’t know. I still believed I had this incredibly intuitive gift.

The person who is the teacher has another opportunity for disillusionment which is the revealing of their own doubt, uncertainty and unknowing which challenges idealisation and the idea that the teacher has a greater grasp of certainty.

Paul: I think there’s a confusion in the culture between idealisation and certainty. An idealised figure would be an expert or something .......... Because it means that it’s the wizard of Oz I think would be the most useful parable. Cause the Wizard of Oz, are you familiar with the book, um because Dorothy and her friends work on the assumption that the wizard will know. And at a certain point she says you’re a very bad man or weak man, he says no I’m a good man but a poor wizard. It’s very important to know the distinction

Being in groups and in particular the experiential group of training is a place where the unknown emerges through not knowing what is expected or what is happening, and having to sit with the unknown and the discomfort. Through realising that this is a place where you can do what you like and allow your attention to hover you begin to notice that things happen in others and the way you relate to them that you do not understand.

Jenny: I’m aware that because I’m struggling, its like being in an experiential group you know the first time you go in what’s supposed to be happening here and nobody tells you what’s supposed to happen. And it’s the thing in that group and for me all I would do is watch and um wouldn’t contribute at all until I’d figured out and it’s a bit like that here. I haven’t figured out so I am uncomfortable with the not knowing.

Rachel: Well I think being a member of a group was hugely informative for me uh the starting way back ten years ago in groups and learning that almost everywhere we go we are actually going to be reacting to family members. I don’t know what that has to do with the unknown. I suppose that was unknown to me that that was going to happen and it has now become so obvious that I will react to people in a certain way and according to the way I probably have done throughout my life even though now I’ve got a little bit of knowledge about what’s happening what actually taps into my, what makes me react.

**Facing own difficulties**

The intellectual aspects of learning can dominate training but do not address our own difficulties such as the narcissistic hurt of realising we do not know and other forms of madness and in fact the continual drive to know is designed to miss the pain of not knowing. According to Alan there is a need for a revolutionary kind of learning that helps us to face our ignorance and tolerate unknowing, which life events rather than training forced upon him. A revolution is when the unknown disrupts you and makes you face something you may find painful. What a life event seems to do is shake us
up so that we can recognise anxiety and the fact that maybe we were already shaken up before training. Mel puts this more pithily saying "The process of training and analysis is somewhere that you can experience your own madness." Training can, therefore, be a revolutionary process although Rachel recognises her own reluctance to acknowledge that because "I forget how hard it is to come up against yourself." She feels she didn't know how hard it was going to be, even when she was in it but has enormous pleasure in having come through it.

Alan: Learning things intellectually was reasonably painless cause it never challenged my omniscience but it did mean that I missed out on some of, a lot of the supervision and analysis that I should have had in the middle of my career .......... and I do think that, that your theme of the unknown has a lot to do with this that um if I’d been more tolerant of not knowing things I’d have learned more. Well it follows naturally doesn’t it, not comfortably.

Rachel: I think I tend to forget that that too, just how hard it was yes. You are coming up against yourself in a really difficult way when you’re doing that but very worth while and of course to bring it back to the theme which quite naturally happened for me then you don’t know its going to be hard work when you set out on it. And when you’re in it there’s certainly something about oh I’ve gotta get through this um and enormous pleasure at this stage in having come this far.

Elsewhere and afterwards

Whilst training can be an experience in itself that has the potential to open us up or close us down to unknowing learning about the unknown is often situated elsewhere than training. It can be located in many other experiences where the concern is less with learning about and more to do with being involved in life experiences from which we can learn. It is more a lifelong struggle. It is compared with the experience of personal therapy and the process of life and living which can be what brings us into training and which continues alongside and on after training.

Jan: It isn’t something that I have bee able to learn but it is something I have been able to read about and also experience.

Rachel: Well I actually do think a lot about the unknown um and I think it hasn’t necessarily come through my training but its very much there now with my therapy. And its very much there with my own life my own feelings about things. Um right so yes it probably did come from my training as well, that maybe opened my eyes to it

Jenny: If I thought it was appropriate, if it wasn’t overwhelming a little bit about myself, if I thought it was going to be helpful to the client instead of being this blank screen. Um and also allow myself to actually have some fun with a client and allow them to play in that safe place too which wasn’t in our training. You don’t, they didn’t tell us about that bit, so for me being in therapy that was a period of growing and broadening experience but within those boundaries,
Our experience continues after training but training can affect us and be the beginning of something, the beginning of learning from experience. Alan, having gone through his own struggle to open up to learning from experience, offers a different kind of criterion for safe practice as remaining open to learning.

Dave: All the evidence is that people are initially very affected by the training that they have but as time goes by that recedes into the past its experience that’s going on.

Alan: The criteria for the qualification, for us is not at all well hardly at all what do they know, but if there’s one criteria that is most important it is, is it safe to let this person out as a qualified psychotherapist? And what I mean by safe is will they go on learning or having escaped our clutches will they make sure that they never ever learn anything again basically because they’re arrogant?

6.3.3 The unknown from personal therapy and supervision

First hand experience

The therapist’s own therapy is a place where we experience unknowing in a number of ways, for example as the unconscious, or as just not understanding, at first hand. These experiences become a go between that provides links between our experience of the ideas introduced in theory, and our client work.

Jenny: I think theory highlights it there is the unconscious there are things that we just don’t understand and um there are these experiences you can have where you think I knew that was going to happen or I haven’t heard from my friend and she suddenly rings that night. The way that we, the Freudian slips, the way that we say things uh so there’s the theory there’s our own experience of it and there’s our client work as experience of it.

Another group of unknowns that the therapist as patient experiences is the effect of expectations, for example, in the form of wants and needs. Although not confined to beginnings not knowing what you are going to get and not getting what you want are present from the outset and the therapist as patient learns to tolerate the associated frustration. Wants and needs re emerge at times of change throughout the process of personal therapy, not least that you cannot imagine how it will change you and no one can really tell you. Jenny highlights the question of whether, in the face of the patient’s unknowing, it is the therapist’s job to explain what will happen, based on a known formula or whether the unknown of it has to be experienced together, from the beginning. In fact what therapists learn from their own therapy after continually discovering unknown things is that the unknown is more a process of unknowing and once you stop looking for the known a different kind of experience is possible.

Jenny: I think initially they do because they don’t know what to expect and I think part of the question was do we make it known to them what to expect. It’s not like we’ve got a formula, I mean we do to formulations in our work but they are for, for our benefit. Um,
but it’s not some thing that we would say well because of the oedipal, because of your ego strength because of this it’s the way you are. So it is unknown for them isn’t it?

Rachel: And isn’t that difficult too and that’s a rhetorical question that being open to not getting what you want and so maybe you don’t even know what you want in the first place and maybe our clients come with not knowing what they want I’m sure most of them don’t know what they want cause they don’t know what they are gonna get. You have to be open to not getting what you want because you don’t know what you are going to get

Jan: So much in therapy, that’s about finding out the unknown. You know, clients come and they want to find out. I mean I’ve done that in my own therapy as find out, you know what is it? I wanna know what it is and then if I know what it is then I’ll be ok. And of course when you’ve done that time and time again you realise that it, that’s short lived that actually the living process is kind of, um, more maybe about unknowing. No that’s not right, the need to know isn’t so strong so therefore it gets more interesting when you stop looking at what you can know.

Sometimes we notice strange experiences of our own that we do not understand and recognise them as similar to something we may be experiencing with clients. A way of speaking of these experiences may emerge or it becomes clear that not only is it impossible to name them, they are unknown, it is unnecessary to and they can remain unknowable. We seem to need to realise there is a difference through our own process in therapy. So sometimes acknowledging the process, for example that we don’t need to plan what to say and may not know where that will take us can open us to the excitement of not knowing which creates a curiosity, expectancy rather than expectation. On the other hand realising that, not only do we do not know what is occurring, we neither want or need to know and can allow the other and their experience to be.

Jenny: That unknown situation not that he can, you can’t move forward and you can’t move back, you don’t know where your at, a sort of powerlessness. Then I think it’s been an exciting thing in my own therapy is actually going to see my therapist and not knowing what was going to come up, what we were going to work with. I remember my first therapist saying, you know you don’t have to come with an agenda which was a big thing for me.

Mel: [a patient] talks about feeling stripped bare and being very raw and I’m saying all this because actually I think what, something then happened to me which, which I think is connected to this sort of not knowing about something. Because what then began to happen was um, in my own analysis I was unable to speak and I had session after session unable to speak. But it wasn’t, although I wanted to speak I just drifted off into another sort of limbo sort of dreamy sort of state where I didn’t know whether what was going on in my mind was something I’d said or whether it was inside me. There was no difference between inside and outside. It was a very bizarre experience that went on and on for quite some time and, um, I should have felt it was related to what was going on with my patient but I couldn’t tell you what it was or why it was happening and err, and I and I didn’t want to try and pin it down.

Jan: You know, and something is shifting for me in that I can, I’m sort of ok with me, with the struggle and the anxiety you know which can be horrible and very very real. But its like ok so I’m feeling anxious and unhappy or sad or struggling or whatever but I
don't have this great desire to talk about it like I used to. And I just wonder whether that is opening up something else for me, possibly the unknown or more of the unknown, but then you get into the question of what is unknown what do we mean by unknowing or unknown?

And that for me at the moment its like in therapy. I just want to go there and I'm not sure that you can just go there actually because you don't know where you are going and if you planned where you were going it upsets the that that special unique moment.

Not least personal therapy is a place to learn about your own difficulties or a place to take them once a shock, whether from life or training has opened them up. Experiencing what we might call our own madness can be a relief that permits all kinds of unknowing experiences. For example Kevin found the realisation that unknowing is different to madness, such as a search for certainty, means unknowing is less frightening. We are then freed from trying to gain power over the world and others which leads to acceptance in relationships. Accepting the other in this way has implications for practice where we can tolerate the uncertainty of the unknown other and their unknown desires and do not need to cling onto theory for security.

Meth: I suppose that’s part of um what am I thinking. Um I suppose I’m thinking about my own sort of process of training and experience of analysis and so on and thinking about how in a way that has to be somewhere you can experience your own madness if you want to call it that or whatever.

Kevin: I think the kind of leap for me has been when I stop trying to make the world a better place really and that you can then not know, but its too desperately frightening to not to know if you are trying to make the world a better place.

Jenny: Being in therapy for four years, sitting opposite this lady in her sixties and not knowing that I was experiencing her as my father, and I was relating in a way as I would have done had she been my father. But um, but it was just incredible because for years for two years I didn’t know that’s what was happening. Um I just thought she was a therapist and I got very bored with it and I would just walk out and shut the door and that was it and think that was it and I don’t have to go there for another six or seven days and of course nothing happened. That’s why it took so long and then it was like then it lifted, and I would behave with her waiting for the judgement waiting for the retribution being found out and of course it never came. And that was incredible um so that was my experience of working with partly the unconscious and I wasn't realising that was happening.

One way to view therapy is as supportive so that we can take courage in finding our way although the experience of unknowing in therapy is found to be more challenging resulting in learning something about ourselves and also discovering our own voice which can lead to more flexibility in our practice. For example Jenny thinks that the fluidity she experiences in practice “is about allowing myself to be more human to feel more real and feel I can take things to supervision.” Often these challenges seem to arise in our experience, as a patient, in relationship with our own therapist.
Once we can experience a space to play the need to protect ourselves, for example, through the psychoanalytic idea of the “blank screen,” by not engaging at a relational level and by relying on what we perceive as rules or boundaries diminishes. Whilst training provides a baseline, a beginning, time and therapy allow us to think beyond. We become able to think for ourselves too when we are less concerned with “getting it right” and as a result learn more from supervision because we do not need to hide things.

Sara: It has informed my practice quite considerably in that I have experience of making a journey into the unknown and um I think the reason, what has come out of the for me is that I think its about honesty and I think that if you’re true to yourself then I think that you can find happiness.

Jenny: After about three and a half years later she [therapist] lost her temper and she shouted at me and I just looked at her and waited til the end of the session until I could get out, and said I thought I was the one who was bloody supposed to get angry not you. And the next week we were on a completely different level and that’s when it changed and I spose its because it gave me the voice that up til three and a half years, I had, I didn’t have a voice and her getting angry I discovered that actually I can.

Jan: I wonder whether I was in that place before I started all this just thinking about it, you know, before then maybe I was in a better place to, no that’s not true is it really? No, its strange isn’t it because to get where I am I’ve had to go through learning about myself. Its only now that I’ve learned about myself, the known that I can explore what I think, what I say, rather than um kind of, link it to the written word.

In supervision we can also come to face things that we do not know especially the assumptions we make which, when challenged, open up the question of how we know what a patient means if we haven’t asked. Supervision can also reinforce the idea that we just do not know well enough what is happening, when perhaps unknowing would enable us to meet the patient in his despair. Eventually we learn through a mixture of therapy and supervision to find our voice and speak even when we do not know what we are saying but do know it is never about being right.

Alan: Well I don’t know about you but I get confronted with the fact that I didn’t know something. I suppose with patients sometimes there is a point at which I finally understand something that I thought I understood which is a bit shocking, but then I get this in supervision as well all the time. When my supervisor says to me he’ll look at my interpretation and he’ll say but how did you know that?

Rachel: Constantly being questioned. I think I was just thinking of the other thing that supervision, just constantly being afraid to open my mouth and say what it was that had happened in the room with the client because of the questioning that was going around. And the feeling that I just couldn’t get it right which enabled me to come away thinking well maybe you’re not getting it right and maybe you’re never getting it right.

6.3.4 The unknown in practice
Learning to learn

The unknown is ever present in practice but in particular the patient is the unknown other and the way therapy proceeds is largely unknown. Learning about the unknown is to do with the experience of being immersed in situations again and again. Although one cannot predict what will happen because the course of each unique situation is unknowable the knowing arises within the parameters of the situation. What we learn is how to become open to that process, to allow ourselves to be submerged in the situation so that what we do is embodied and contextual. We learn anew each time how to learn and the starting point is unknowing.

Martha: I was thinking about oh, what clients bring about unknown. Um what is unknown when they come to see us? Quite often unknown is the outcome and outcome is already putting structure on it and depending on what theory you work with if you're totally person centred you would just start and somewhere along the line you would end.

Alan: I think, is what really counts and I think of how many sessions begin for me with a very clueless feeling and with that a very inadequate feeling that I'm supposed to understand and I don't.

Dave: I think there are different ways of knowing things as well. You know there's the kind of academic finding out about something through studying it but there's also the kind of knowing that comes about as a result of immersing oneself in situations and doing things and they become kind of embodied to some extent ...... With the second kind of learning, which is learning how to do something by immersing yourself in it, I think the knowing is situational so that what I might know about um arises within the um parameters of a particular kind of situation which may or may not be transferable to another kind of situation.

The unknown as unknowing is an ordinary everyday experience which Mel sees as needing a continual struggle to maintain in the day to day work of practice. A claim to knowing gets in the way of the learning, the minute we think we know we stop unknowing. In particular knowing gets in the way of being able to learn in the situation.

Mel: I'm very well aware of the part of me that will want to grab onto what's known or hear something about what a client says and think oh yeah, you know, that's this, this and this. So I think it manifests in very tiny little everyday ways. I don't think its something which has to be great big sort of spiritual, once in a life time experience or something like that, of a sort of numinous contact with the unknown or something, but just little things all the time in every day life really.

Immersion is an appropriate word for the swamp like texture of practice where unknowing becomes an experience to be tolerated but we cannot learn about the unknown in practice if we cannot tolerate what unknowing creates. The feeling is one of anxiety and the idea of the unknown continuously echoes with the unknown of death. Kevin is explicit in his linking of his tolerance of unknowing with his not being afraid of death. Whatever the anxiety or discomfort of unknowing is, it can
lead to an inability to stay in the room with the other, both for client and therapist. The desire to take one's leave can manifest both literally, by leaving the room, killing off before the unknown as deathly happens and metaphorically for example by attempting to fuse with the other. The fusion can occur, for the therapist, through identifying with the client and wanting them to be the same, trying to change them to what we think of as better or picking up and working with comments too quickly rather than letting be.

Rachel: I don't know whether I am able to enable my clients to understand this bit about the unknown how can we ever know that we're getting them to see things that way. I think we do see change in our clients but what is that change and what's brought it about? Is it just being with some one who's prepared just to hang loose and feel they don't know or not? I mean some clients desperately want to know and maybe they are the ones that leave because they can't cope with that idea.

Jan: I don't know in the room and I suppose in the early days it was like I did know and I'd go full on. I'd go full on and I'd pick up on things like that immediately whereas now I'm much more able to let it go and just you know just put it away some where and pick up on it if it comes up again. There's not that urgency to try and cover everything at once um and I spose I experience that unknown bit in the room now and I don't know but I don't find out at this particular moment.

Jan: The changing is difficult but the staying in it is shitty as well and I have had clients who decide to stay as they are even when they can see something they've not been able to see before. They've chosen to stay with what they know because going with the unknown is hard.

Learning patience permits our own thoughts, for example in the form of reverie (eg Bion 1970) as well as permitting the other in the sense of allowing them to find their own way and tolerate their own unknowing which might seem unbearable to begin with or maybe for a long time.

Rachel: I think that's incredibly important when I'm with my clients and then I can sit back and may be go into, a maybe room for reverie, and let them speak what they want to speak and pick up on it in the here and now rather than trying to pin everything.

Rachel: Things change so we cannot be sure that when our clients come to us one night that uh they're going to me in the same kind of mind, feeling in the same way as when they came the previous night. So I suppose we have to leave ourselves open to the different attitudes and different feelings from them. And I think it would be lovely to be able to give that feeling um to our clients the feeling of uh because I think it extends possibilities if you can not be sure of something, if you can actually gain from that because it becomes more fluid. Leaving ourselves open to the ways our clients change means we have to remain unsure which extends possibilities.

The differences between knowing and unknowing

There are all kinds of distinctions to be made about what is known and what is unknown. The unknown can be viewed like the unconscious as a potential to become known but we still need to be careful and the clearer we are that we do not know the less likely we are to make assumptions and not test the evidence. The unknowable
can be viewed as how a relationship will develop which cannot be known, and for
Paul each person has to find their way and as they know more about each other things
that are unknown become known but we cannot predict the effects of that knowing
especially in a relationship. It is the difference that keeps the work alive. Kevin
views the unknown differently for example after the shock of his breakdown he
realised he was more self aware because he knew he didn’t know himself and he also
came to recognise if he didn’t know something. The kind of knowing that becomes
known, such as the idea of knowing more about self, is not however seen as effecting
a cure because when that doesn’t feel better Paul believes people start to lose hope
whereas starting from the pint of view that a lot of things are unknowable opens up
the possibility for spontaneous change. Transformation does not come from any
known course and so is unknowable, however it could be viewed that some unknowns
emerge between people, as they journey through something together and the unknown
occurs as the transpersonal in the moment which is indescribable and ineffable. There
is another distinction in the unknowable as spiritual other or death itself which are the
final unknowable.

Alan: You have to tell the difference between the unknown and the unknowable which
makes it even more scary in a way. So for a start I suppose I’m assuming that your
concern with the unknown is within the area of practicing as a psychotherapist...........
How you deal with the unknown in terms of working effectively with a patient no matter
what may come in from the outside come into the area of? So basically the patient is, the
patient is the unknown isn’t he? You have to tell the difference between the unknown
and the unknowable which in psychotherapy is to do with working effectively with a
patient and what they bring which is unknown.

Paul: This would be, [that is responses to certain situations that come into being in a
certain set of circumstances] I think the essence of the phenomenological approach, that
every situation would be potentially fresh, anew even though it may resemble past
situations. You know there maybe factors in it which are unknown and which are new,
and because even if you find yourself with another client or another therapist an say ah
yes they’re just like the last person or the last situation, time has moved on and things
aren’t exactly the same. They’re similar to but they’re not exactly the same.
Dave: I think there are different levels of knowing. I mean if your are thinking about
knowing something as an absolute which is shared in all situations you know everywhere
then that’s quite a rare kind of a thing. Um but learning about, or knowing how to operate
even certain kinds of conditions um is probably more common you know. I can kind of
know that but I wouldn’t necessarily know where it was going to lead or quite how I am
going to negotiate the next bit or this point. I just know enough to manage this bit
something like that.

The process of differentiation can only happen in relationship where we learn the
difference between self and others. The distinction between one thing and another
permits the other to be other and we seem to learn this through recognising the way
clients act as a reminder of our own confusion about who we are. One way we know
whether we can accept this difference is in the way we are able to cope with the
tension of being in no-mans-land with a client. This kind of experience seems to
arouse an almost unbearable tension, opening recognition of the void in ourselves, and
the extent to which we experience the hopelessness as coming back towards us is an
indication of our own confusion. Our own struggle with separateness and closeness
can also appear in how we feel about ending with clients as another experience of the
unknown.

Sara: Well its interesting I think I’ve always had this thought. I’ve heard other people say
it so its not an original thought, that clients find their way to the counsellor they need.
And its extraordinary that I seem to have a lot of clients at transitional stages and an
awful lot of this, do I make this leap do I leave this person? And I think about it and I’m
very mindful of not over identifying um so I have to carry that tension.

Sara: Its one of the things again. I mean its one of the things and again I’m looking at
clients and they carry ambivalence towards me and maybe the decision when they know
which direction they’re going in whatever that is and into it it’s the ambivalence. It can
create a sense of hopelessness in them can’t go back, can’t escape from it, can’t go into
the future, they’re in no-mans-land.

Jenny: Some body is in the process of splitting up their business and but it’s all in his
partner’s hands about how quickly he does it. Because he’s, my client needs money out
of the business and it, where that client is, his situation and it’s what it’s doing to him
and how it’s effecting him and that, that unknown situation not that he can, you can’t
move forward and you can’t move back you don’t know where you are a sort of
powerlessness. Then I think it’s been an exciting thing in my own therapy is actually
going to see my therapist and not knowing what was going to come up what we were
going to work with.

Jan: Its like ending with clients um or anything to do with clients where in the beginning
I used to get really troubled about that and now I am much more able to uh live with the
fact that I don’t know and I’m not gonna.

Our experience with clients can teach us what happens when we need to know the
other and cannot then allow the other to meet us. For example, Jenny describes a
patient who cannot allow her to accept him although she also acknowledges how
difficult it is for her to accept that, which reveals itself by her need to understand him.
When we learn to stop trying to know the other we are able to permit (as in the
original meaning of suffering) the other to meet us, and what then happens is the
aliveness of relationship.

Jenny: He assumes, he’s always had to assume what people are thinking and then he
reacts to that and as a development of his false self he has to work to earn attention
affection, acknowledgement and I think that’s what he’s doing with me instead of just
allowing me to accept him.

Jan: I suppose that’s where my practice has moved on, is that I can live with the
unknown and therefore my clients have go there with me in a way that somehow its ok.
And its not that I’ll say that, oh its ok, its something that’s happened in the room that is
not even said but its happening and you see that’s when it gets difficult because then you
have to start speaking of the unknown. Something that’s happening in the room and that

you know it's happening but you're not, its difficult to find the words of what is happening but it is just happening.

6.3.5 The experience of life and living

**Lifelong learning from life**

Learning about the unknown is a lifelong struggle and the challenge of life although it can also be a challenge we would rather avoid. Life is what may take us into training as a psychotherapist, is with us through training and continues afterwards but we need to remember that there is no more unknown in therapy than in living. Life cannot be separated from practice, indeed therapy is about the unknown of life and living and the philosophical questions we cannot but help asking, so life is the learning experience. In life and work the therapist and the person are not separate. For Sara learning about the unknown comes mostly from just being alive and while knowing our history helps us cope with the unknown she questions whether anyone can know how to know others. The idea that we might know, whilst illusory, is something to hold in the sea of unknowing.

Kevin: So the unknown to me is quite a, quite a high level idea really if you like. Um how do I live in this world? So I can’t easily separate out me as a therapist and me as a person, so what I can tell you is that I began my life by not knowing and then I knew and now I don’t and that roughly has paralleled my journey with my clients really, that I didn’t know and then I learnt lots of skills and now I don’t know.

Mel: The more I think about it the more I think it is, it underlines sort of philosophy really for me about counselling and psychotherapy, um, which is actually not just about working in counselling and psychotherapy. It’s about my life because I see the two connecting. I don’t see the way I am as a counsellor or therapist as different in a way. I mean obviously there are boundaries when you’re working but I don’t feel that fundamentally what I believe is different. I think the whole thing is part of it and so underlying is my personal philosophy as well as my working one.

Dave: I suppose um I would take the view that that life is a mystery in any case. And um you know, if I cant even really answer questions like what I am or what I’m doing here or what here is or anything at all then um actually its not surprising that an enterprise like therapy, which is um, you know, its material is profound. That it should share that in common because it is the stuff of life, I guess that we are investigating and that to come up with, um to imagine that one could at any point know it is an illusion. Maybe some sort of comfort that well, might you know, hang on to for a bit.

Learning to be a psychotherapist is a lifelong process of learning from life and learning that the whole thing is unknown and a great deal of that we cannot even come to know. Training and therapy are just a part of life that perhaps help us realise the struggle with the unknown out of which may come realisation of the possibilities that life has to offer both what we might call happy or sad experiences. The people
we live with such as family and friends also get drawn into that struggle and may stay with us or leave and likewise we may stay or leave. The journey as a therapist is seen as examining life but not separate from it and whilst theory and training may be helpful in explaining what happens as we experience life, or reflecting on life may help us think, the unknown is not learned about but has to be lived. Knowing, especially thinking we know who we are, can be the comforter which hides us from the struggle and pain of life so an idea is something to hold on to especially when experiences in life create a loss of knowing who we are. Mel explains the ideas of Fordham (1985) where the reaching into new experiences leads initially to deintegration and then the experience is re integrated with the self. A feeling of disintegration is seen by others as occurring when there is a lack of something to identify with, when we catch a hint of our own unknowing. For Alan learning “is against identification really that it really every time you learn something you ‘unidentify’ every time you drop your identity you feel like you’re sort of crossing a chasm.” Knowing may bring an idea to life but that conception leads to the death of something else so even a decision to live in the here and now rather than trying to map out life is a way to close down another thought, such as who might I become, as that might create too much anxiety.

Jan: Its an ongoing learning process as I say, which sounds very clichéd but there might be something in the cliché. Well there is isn’t there? And there are quite a few clichés in that go along in this kind of work, but they’re there, and they do have meaning and not to be brushed off.

Rachel: I think you want to know how I feel about the unknown and where I learned about it. But I think its just been an evolving process within me that uh, that I could certainly, I could lay at the door of education the sort of education that I’ve had because it opened up my mind to thinking about the unknown.

Sara: I’m using this word strength a lot but things have, I think I can’t say its always been, but I mean like most things in life its sometimes it’s a struggle. But um I think I have been enormously enriched by that experience. Um and maybe its, yes I think it has informed my practice now. Um the difficulty of it, I mean that is the reality, the difficulty of that is over identifying and wanting people to do the same.

Therapy itself can be a living experience where Mel learned that this unknown is something that is lived and cannot be said in thinking about experience, for example her own profound lived experience of the unknown with a therapist who could allow that unknowing to be.

Mel: There was a capacity to live the, live with the unknown. The idea of the unknown in a comfortable, isn’t enough, isn’t the right word but there is a something, it was more than an intellectual knowledge of something it was a lived thing, um which sort of underpinned.
Life as the teacher

Life cannot be predictable, even the most ordinary events such as walking down the street have an unknowable element, and Paul thinks that because psychotherapy has become split off from everyday experience people do not draw on these experiences to help them understand. While the ordinary, everyday experiences can demonstrate how we do not know ourselves or others, major crises such as divorce or recognising our own despair challenge the certainty of life and knowing. Such events cause a shock which leads to revelations about how we are in the world and sometimes no amount of training or therapy can provide this learning whereas a shocking life event can open us to both what we do not know and the nature of our unknowing. In particular what such revolutionary experience does is to stop the repetition of continuously turning the unknown into the already known so something new can be given life. Life is the teacher. There is a kind of knowing that comes from experience and no amount of reading or studying can replace an actual experience so you cannot know snow until you stand in the snow and then the knowing is beyond words because it pervades your being.

Kevin: I was a bit born again psychodynamic then I had what for me was an awful breakdown. It wasn't in the scheme of things but it was for me and I considered quite seriously suicide and I had to go to a psychiatrist and have tablets and I got better, or better enough to think again cause I had tablets and so there was another sacred cow gone.

Alan: I don't know how relevant this is to your study but I think it probably is what shocked me has been how my, I was divorced about fifteen years ago and I met somebody new and my life turned upside down. And I was, as a result of that, I found myself back in supervision and in psychoanalysis and I began to see that when I first qualified I had felt very unconfident. But what I had actually done was to decide that I had, sounds funny now, I decided that I had an instinctive understanding of psychoanalytic technique and that I knew what to do with my patients.

Dave: But I mean I think there is a sense in which you know, vital living, I could put it like that or spontaneous living in the moment means that you are constantly moving into the unknown. It's the unfolding unknown that you are managing or negotiating to the extent that you, um turn it all into something that is known. You your life just becomes a series of repetitions not something new at all but a rather safe sort of formula that you devise.

The people we meet in life, the living relationship with others is the teacher. Whether through the experience of being a daughter or a mother the other is always inferred, another from whom we can learn the dance of relating and yet cannot say how we learned it although we know we acquired it somehow. For Martha the intuitive relating she learned with her mother continues with her daughter but the way it is
communicated between them is not reducible to language. Through the relationship with others we learn the edges of our love and hate and once we can accept the extremes of such feelings we do not need to control the world and others or for them to conform to our expectations. Kevin feels he has learned in all kinds of relationships, whether counselling, teaching or with his partner, it is in the encounter that he learns what he is capable of.

Martha: I think its there because my daughter has it now but she has modelled, she can see me doing it to her you know. I'm not, I don't counsel her but I'll say, hey. She's very quick on picking it up and she comes back to me in that way, now mum. Um oh she's very, I know you're feeling like this, this and this and I'm thinking but you're, the way you acted then was feeling like this, this or this. And I'm thinking I say wow how did you get that?

Kevin: If you kind of accept that things you experience are very bad experiences and some are very good then come about without much effort, then you're in a much clearer place to not know. And I think the knowing is to do with either well its gaining power over the world in which you live.

6.3.6 The spiritual/mystical unknown

Elsewhere, otherwise

We come to recognise that there are experiences that are elsewhere, otherwise not definable. Such experiences are seen as spiritual and on the one hand they can be viewed as out there, like looking at the night sky, or deeply embodied and in fact we ourselves are the mystery where we cannot answer questions about who we are or where we are. These questions are seen as profound. The spiritual may be seen as beyond being or alternatively as ordinary, as for Mel as "little everyday ways" of being towards others, as abstract or concrete and neither, as a turning point in life or not some sublime spiritual contact so it seems different for each person and yet in common is the indescribable.

Martha: Well it is elsewhere and otherwise and almost up there spiritual but its very much embedded in here [pointing to her solar plexus].

Kevin: So for me it's a big personal unknown. For one there are mysterious things like going out and looking out in the sky at night and that is less scary now than it was when I was twenty but it still scares me. For me its mainly been something to do with, I kind of feel the need to defend myself a little bit, but I'll just say it, its kind of not being super conscious of ethics not being super conscious of the rules although I have never ever crossed one of one of those boundaries you know in quite a long time. But its something to do with going though it with people and then the unknown occurs, or the transpersonal or the that moment which is indescribable, and there is the ineffable which is also the unknown so I couldn't really say what happens.
Kevin: So for me the unknown is a deeply inner place rather than um some state of being. Some place in space, its something to do with not knowing even what is right and I suppose I must have come around to this earlier. I think you could know in a situation what we think is right and usually that's a better way to live than not but I don't have an inner sense of um absolutes and I'm not very interested in realism.

Mel: So I think it manifests in very tiny little everyday ways. I don't think its something which has to be great big sort of spiritual, once in a life time experience or something like that, of a sort of numinous contact with the unknown or something but just little things all the time in every day life really, hope that underlines the general, my general belief system I suppose.

These other kinds of experience are noticeable, for example, in the moments when we reach a limitation or obstruction in a relationship such as when nothing more can be said to each other, when too much has been said, when the other doesn't understand you or they understand too much. The intertextual can become a knot of too many ideas which finally create a termination and yet may allow something else into being. The knot or limit opens up something different where the not knowing can create openness or aliveness or be too frightening.

Mel: I think there's a point at which thinking and words stop really, have to stop. Nothing else happens. It's sort of something other than words and thought. I wonder whether it, I suppose it's like I'm just thinking about this now, it's like a sort of umm respect or acknowledgement that there is an area of each of us and maybe its an area of, of our experience of human beings that cannot be touched or reached. Um either by another person or maybe be ourselves really. There, there is that, there's something and maybe its to do with like a sort of potential.

Learning is a mystery like life and coming to know is mystical and not reducible purely to the power of reason and so questions of how we remain open to that way of knowing arise. It is not the kind of knowing that comes from searching but rather it comes towards us. For Martha remaining open to experience means "being open with all of your being" and whilst being open or closed is not mechanistic we can be either open or closed to experience. The extent to which we are open to learning in this way is linked to our feelings of vulnerability, of being exposed to others, and the everyday contingencies of life which can take over. For Martha there is another sense a sixth sense or is it something other than what can be known concretely through our senses? Another sense is required in order to make a different sense of experience but it is easier to say what it is not.

Alan: I think its, I think its utterly mystical the idea that we can come to know something not through the senses or through the power of reason, whatever you call it. Mental power is mystical, revolutionary, um anti scientific. That's to say anti materialist um and though exciting very attractive. I mean I like the idea of disruptive ideas but I think its implications are pretty strange.... As I say its a pretty, very serious implication that
knowledge come to us not through information processing but something, for want of a better word, we call intuition. I think it's pushing us towards something spiritual or religious there isn't really much more you can say about it is there?

When we are open and able to tolerate the suffering of unknowing Kevin believes we can no longer “avoid things that speak to you from the unknown”. The mystical or spiritual may be the kind of experience we are afraid of because it is not the kind of knowing that has value. This kind of knowing does not have a language but also as Mel says “it is difficult to talk about to others who have a different language.” There can be a reluctance to speak of spirituality in revealing our beliefs to others as well as a difficulty in finding the words.

**Beliefs hope and faith**

Towards the end we seem to arrive at spirituality whether in a religious sense with consideration of God or as unknowable without a concept of the divine. The spiritual as infinite does not need differentiation. Faith as opposed to ‘a faith’ holds belief that something will happen but we do not know what rather than needing a certainty in order to get through unknowing. The unknowable experience gives faith without pinning down and allows each to find their belief.

Mel: I think it is not existing in its ultimate state um but I, whether we fear it or not is another question really isn’t it. But I think that’s again connected to that sort of spiritual idea of whether you’ve, it’s a bit like not being afraid of death really, its the same sort of idea, can we truly live without a fear of death? That is a very high almost unachievable sort of spiritual aim I think and its connected.

Paul: I’m not using faith in the sense of sort of Christian sense of unshakeable faith in our, I’m talking about faith in the unknowable that something will happen even if we couldn’t say. We have some sense something will happen and I think that gives, that’s very helpful in psychotherapy when people look back over their lives. They look at the potential future and they can’t see any grounds for hope. They’re doing it on the basis of the known, of relationship to the known and the unknown. You know if they do a bit more work on themselves they’ll change their circumstances, the unknown will suddenly become known and then it will be solved. And so that’s only correct up to a point, there’s that whole vast area beyond where you couldn’t say what will happen tomorrow, you can only have the best estimate.

Rachel: I’m not religious, I don’t have a feeling that there’s a God, but on the other hand I don’t know. There maybe something, or maybe its just a spirituality and in myself so there’s a certain feeling of a lack of confidence because of not knowing. On the other hand a comforting feeling about not knowing, cause then its all there for finding out about.

6.3.7 Fear of death

**Fear**
When we do not have something concrete to hold in mind the fear appears followed closely by a known concept, the unknown must be turned into the known. The unknown having no form reminds us of non existence and so we search but searching infers we already know. Alternatively the unknown as non existing resists conceptualisation and creates a tension between deciding whether to search or whether to accept. The unknown reminds us, therefore, that we do not know what life is and what we are, we do not know where we came from or where we go. Knowledge such as family history leaves us thinking we know where we came from so we do not have to think about where we go. We can be terrified to live although Alan sees the fear as essential and it may also be what stops us being arrogant or omnipotent, it reminds us of our limits. Or to put it another way as Jenny says “we are not omnipotent so there will be so much unknown”.

Dave: Well I should think that um, people always say that the unknown is frightening. I’m not sure that that’s always right but that’s what’s said and I think there is quite a lot of truth in it. And so people try, we, we, people try to turn the unknown into the known so that we can predict it and control it and manage it and won’t be taken by surprise by it and so on. But I think its to underestimate our ability, um, to manage the unknown cause I think probably we really we are doing that anyway we just don’t like thinking about it

Alan: Well you need the doubt of it, um but I also assume maybe in a persecutory way that only the fear would keep me from being arrogant really um and I don’t know if that’s my pathology. I suppose I tend to think that a measure of arrogance is normal because its more comfortable because its what people do.

Sara: I wouldn’t think, I would think of the future, I would think of the unknown as being in the future. That was my assumption, that’s what that would conjure up to me. It would be the future but then I suppose you’re right, I guess there are unknowns in the past but we only perhaps make sense um well for me it would be in the future I think because it makes it more manageable.

Living in the unknown leads some to invent another reality, they would rather be mad than unknowing although for others the unknown feels mad. As Mel points out the unknown can feel like the breaking down of boundaries, not knowing, no anchor points or “fear of losing my mind” but such experiences may be part of spiritual growth as people like Jung and Freud found. The fear is fear of these kinds of experience because letting go of the knowing is like not existing hence a map, such as theory or controlling experience, locates us in an un locatable void. Avoidance of the feeling of fragmentation as either inventing another reality or defining a map of human experience ultimately means we do not have to face disillusionment or disappointment or the ultimate as despair at our unavoidable fate. The unknown as non existence cannot be defined but has to be born. Coping can mean avoidance or
struggle, or learning to endure the unknown, as generated by the above phenomena and located in experience, rather than intellectual knowing where change occurs at an ontological level. We are no longer frightened of these experiences or concerned by what others think of us.

Mel: But I think that comes back to living something doesn’t it? Living with that unknown bit doesn’t it or yes that the bit that we call madness. It has that uh fear of the boundaries going and not knowing what’s going on. Um there aren’t any anchor points and so on and I suppose our capacity to bear that is related to um this thing um acknowledging something about the unknown and being able to bear that. Because I think its an unbearable thing, its an unbearable terrifying thing really but there’s an underlying fear in all of us really connected to a fear of annihilation, really a sort of letting go of everything known is like not existing.

Sara: I think it was a way of containing and holding of anxiety and when I’m dealing with clients now who are anxious, particularly if they’ve, yes they’re attachments are not strong, um then there will be lots of trying to provide themselves with a map lots of plans and things to be mapped out. So I think what it does is a containing and holding of massive anxiety.

Experiences of loss act as reminder of despair preceded by tension and struggle in the face of the absent other which as Jenny highlights is the terrible place of the unknown as not knowing (whether mother is going to come back or not) where the child after terrible tension relaxes into despair. She also wonders whether this despair at the unknown might just be a pattern that’s being repeated. This is the hope that theory offers that despair is reducible to the safety of a past experience rather than an unknowable future of non existence.

Jenny: Well its almost like the unbearable-ness, the unthinkable-ness of being in it, especially when you’ve seen that film and that look on that child’s face its just horrendous, the one by Bowlby. This child is in hospital and its in this cot with big high sides and its mother comes and goes and it knows the mother is coming back and suddenly the mother doesn’t come back. So it sort of looks around and then sort of gives up and something breaks inside it and it just goes into despair and sets up all its defences so never to feel like that again.

Forms of disappointment or disillusionment act as reminder of despair and for the therapist. Eventually we too have to face that nothing is going to cure us of our despair but perhaps only nothing, for example as the unknown or unknowing, is what can help us face it. And yet hope keeps us trying to be helpful, keeps us thinking we can count on something, for example to help some one change rather than bearing forms of despair. As Rachel says “the moment you start to talk about the unknown you don’t know, it could lead anywhere, is difficult to get hold of and yet there is so much unknown about life like will I be here tomorrow. So we cannot count on anything.” Like clients we can attempt to be elsewhere, sometimes literally travelling
abroad or despairing about the world around us, in order to avoid our own despair. Eventually the therapist learns to relax to become able to bear their despair and with that comes facing the other's disappointment that therapy cannot make everything better.

Jan: It brings up loneliness as well in that you know that there's two things, um that there's nothing that's going to make me feel good all the time or solve or just make my life perfect and I suppose I've just go to the point where I'm ok with uh more ok with the imperfections the struggle. Um that kind of thing but then that's always tested isn't it? Its uh just when you think you're ok with it something happens then you get trapped in that awfulness and straggly bit and its horrible and I spose that's enabled me to sit with clients and their own struggles because I can sit with my own struggles. But I also know how difficult that is to have to be in that and the things that we do to get out of it.

Rachel: Well that's life you know and so do our clients when they are disappointed with us and they come to us and they go away not knowing anything more than they knew before when they came in. Do they feel sick? Or do they think well this is part of the process and come back again and try again, still not get the answers, or maybe feel they are getting the answers cause certainly some do. And my own unknowns in my own life and I would go back to religion and not feeling that there's god and what happens at the end of life and life. Um you don't know when its going to end and what happens after that and I mean the unknown as that was something I can look at now and wonder about, and I couldn't do that before I'd recognised that there is so much unknown.

Death

The ultimate unknown is death and how we come to accept death is the fundamental struggle because we cannot know death, in the sense of our own subjective experiencing, in advance. For Martha the experience of speaking of death as a way of facing that aspect of the unknown can also illustrate the kind of relationship that helps with other unknown kinds of experience. A relationship where the unspeakable can be spoken where something terrible can be allowed to live. Acceptance takes time to learn because we resist the unknown which surrounds us and Alan likens the learning to the way “Buddhists are able to empty themselves out of existence and capable of something new because they have given up resistance and are comfortable in the assumption that knowing is provisional and contradictory”. They seem to accept their own evanescence. In the face of death it seems something has to be given up so is resistance a refusal to knowing something which theories, such as the unconscious, say we can come to know or to something we know we cannot know?

Jan: What comes up for me is the ultimate unknowing which is what happens when you die and how people in all sorts of ways, not just with death, but with freedom and everything else kind of come up with ways of avoiding for me what could be the reality is that there is nothing.

Rachel: You know there are certain things that might be there in front of me that I can't bear to look at, possibly the death of family members, um my own death but only because I don't want to give up on this wonderful life I'm having. I would hate actually
to go now because I feel there's so much more I want to do but the fact that I will be
going off, as something I don't know about isn't the problem. I've given up on the idea
of going up to heaven and being with these lovely people I know.

Mel: I think it is not existing in its ultimate state, um but I whether we fear it or not is
another question really isn't it? But I think that's again connected to that sort of spiritual
idea of whether you've, it's a bit like not being afraid of death really its the same sort of
idea. Can we truly live without a fear of death that, is a very high almost unachievable
sort of spiritual aim I think. And its connected I think, the same thing, I think the
unknown in my mind is sort of something connected to the infinite where there isn't a
division between me and you one thing and another and existence I think is defined by
division um so if there isn't a division there isn't existence in a way that we describe it
anyway. And underlying real fear of that, what would be um I don't know if annihilation
is the right word but certainly not existence as we know it.

In the end we need to limit the unknown because as Sara states "its almost, I've been
here an hour so maybe its about as much as one can deal with at any one time so its
such a vast its huge isn't it"? Fifty minutes to an hour is another way to limit, its
easier to end than contemplate our ending. Whereas for Agatha Christie, "Death
Comes as the End," here death comes as the unknown.
7. DETRANSLATING THE UNKNOWN

7.1 Introduction

In order to enable development of the research methodology various aspects of the research will now be reviewed in an attempt to detranslate the translation (after Laplanche 1999) of chapter seven. Firstly consideration will be given to the descriptions of the unknown presented in chapter six. The implications and limitations of these findings related to learning to be a psychotherapist will be discussed, including the way the interactions between interviewer and participant themselves revealed something of the unknown which might be open to further exploration through reverie. Secondly this in turn leads to some examples of a further analysis drawing on reverie. The approach taken draws on the epistemological considerations outlined in chapter five which require acknowledgement of the instability and contemporaneousness of knowledge found in: the pragmatic epistemology of Schon (1992) and Dewey (1929) being concerned in particular with uncertainty and instability compared to a dominant systematising discourse; Derrida’s (1978) approach to demonstrating and subverting attempts to stabilise knowledge by exposing where a text conceals by what it reveals and; an ethical approach to epistemology that questions the effects of understanding on otherness (eg Levinas 1984) in particular the incorporation of the other as a way of proving what has been posited.

The principles of deconstruction where the text is interrogated until it gives way to hidden defences, for example within binary oppositions, will be utilised in order to reveal what is concealed in the relationship between the researcher and participants and between the methodology and research method. The reason for this order of the deconstruction is that the relationship between researcher and participants can be seen in 7.2 to call into question the findings, presented in chapter six, in ways which are largely only recognised afterwards. It will be argued therefore that the evidence seemed to suggest that it is through the relational that the unknown leads to a break down of meaning and meta narrative. These hidden phenomena and the findings therein also disrupted the researcher’s position and understanding of the research in unexpected ways, calling the researcher into question. They also seemed to indicate a
number of difficulties in the phenomenological research method. The intention is to reveal what has been concealed and to identify areas of instability which may be hidden within more systematised aspects in order to begin to illustrate what kinds of knowledge beliefs were at play. Thirdly, following on from these discussions, recommendations for developing a methodology to explore the unknown in the acquisition of therapeutic knowledge will be discussed in 7.3. Finally in section 7.4 conclusions are drawn. This last chapter of the thesis is essentially a reflexive debate, in order to avoid the clumsiness of writing using the third person pronoun and make clear the researcher's position and thinking, sections where the researcher's reflections occur will be written using the first person pronoun.

7.2 Review of Findings

The findings presented in chapter six proceeded from the interview and transcript, through the presentation of individual portraits as recommended by Becker (1992), to the final general summary of the phenomenon "how do psychotherapists learn about the unknown" following Giorgi's (1975, 1985a) method overall. This process of the phenomenological reduction enabled the researcher to become more and more immersed in the data where, for example, recognition of links between different themes and individuals are more recognisable. As a result it is now possible to summarise the findings in the following way.

The unknown cannot be taught but is learned during a process of lifelong enquiry involving experiences, especially encounter with others, who rather than trying to teach us something are open to learning from the unpredictable nature of a living experience too. As in Freud's ideas of learning about psychotherapy (Felman 1987) the unknown is not an object of teaching but can become the teacher. A number of interrelated experiences contribute to this process. In various ways the known, such as theory, some aspects of training, therapy and supervision, practice and life and living are seen as helpful in highlighting that unknowing is a valuable part of human experience present in ordinary, everyday ways as well as the ineffable. Training and practice are seen as having the potential to help us tolerate what unknowing creates, such as anxiety, and in permitting our own thoughts. This appears to require the teacher to be less concerned with what they can teach and more interested in the kind
of space where the unspeakable can be spoken. The teacher, like the therapist, could be seen as the ‘unknower’ and as, therefore, a signifier representing the unknown. Within the idea of the ‘unknower’ are various elements. Firstly the idea of the teacher as ‘unknower’ bears resemblance, but is also different to, the idea of the therapist as ‘unknower’ in Freudian terms as proposed by Blanchot (1993). In psychoanalytic thought, however, the unknown is returned to the unconscious, and for example, the patient may think the therapist already knows about their unconscious and as a result positions the therapist as the one who knows thus closing down the unknowing. Secondly the teacher as ‘unknower’ can be viewed in terms of recognising that they do not know as well as what they do not know and do not know yet. Participants spoke, for example, of the ways in which the teacher can be idealised as the one who knows creating a shock when the fact that they do not know or what they do not know is revealed. They also spoke of the way it is not generally the pre planned teaching activities, but rather the spontaneous, unpredictable events that illustrate the unknown as not yet known, as knowable but as not existing until a moment of creative thought. One way of describing this kind of knowing was linked to the specifics of a situation by the participant Dave in 6.3.2 and could be stated, therefore, as situational knowing. Situational learning could be seen to have some links to Polanyi’s (1966, 1969) unknown as the not knowing what we know, but which is embodied, until it is revealed in a particular set of circumstances. There was a third aspect to the unknown as unknowable or as otherwise and irreducible, perhaps summarised by the participant Mel in 6.3.7 as the infinite.

A condition for this kind of learning is the requirement to avoid colluding with the (re)telling of the learner’s narrative as meta narrative as well as a balance between hope and disillusionment. Immersion in experience and relationships with others, where unspeakable fears such as madness and death can be spoken, can be especially important in enabling us to learn how to learn from and differentiate between such living experiences. Eventually this process seems to lead to recognition of spiritual or mystical experiences that cannot be defined, but are found in everyday ordinary as well as profound experiences, opening up hope in the face of our fear of death. Not knowing can be experienced as not existing so we continually attempt to turn the unknown into the known by directing our thinking towards learning about conceptual knowing. Gradually there may be realisation of the limits of such knowing through
repeated disillusionment which seems eventually to lead to a realisation that nothing can explain everything and after continual searching for answers despair has to be faced. In facing these disappointments the unknown as unknowable, as death can be borne which seems to be related to Blanchot's (1993) ideas that knowing is an attempt to avoid facing the unknown of death.

The above findings are argued as having generalizability in the sense of having possibility or resonance as discussed in 5.5.2. It could be seen therefore that these findings are possible across different modalities because theoretical orientation of participants emerged as less important than relational experiences. The influence of modality may also be an area for further research. Other limitations nevertheless emerge. Firstly the starting point for this research as a question that directly asks about experience of the unknown, when the theoretical and philosophical deliberations of previous chapters argued that the unknown could not be explored directly. It may have been more appropriate to seek description of learning experiences generally to see if the unknown emerged, making it less likely that the researcher's meta narrative influenced the participants. At this stage of researching the unknown, however, the intention was to begin exploring some of the difficulties of researching the unknown in order to develop a methodology for further research, which was also why more experienced psychotherapists were interviewed. Another interesting factor was the way the researcher's assumptions were challenged, perhaps because they were to some extent revealed. Secondly whilst Giorgi's (1985a) method did bring the descriptions to life they were rather one sided whereas the interactions between interviewer and participants sometimes led to a lively disruption. The relational in this aspect could also be seen to disrupt the dialectic of life and death inherent in phenomenology, leading to a question of whether the importance of these two aspects of the findings are part of the bias of the researcher compounded by interest in phenomenology. A different way of analysing the unknown, as interpersonal phenomenon, might be open to further exploration through reverie and some examples of this are presented in 7.3. Thirdly there is an inherent problematic in presenting a general structure of the phenomenon where it could be read as an apodictic truth rather than as contemporaneous.
Fourthly whilst the process of imaginative variation of Giorgi’s (1975, 1985a) phenomenological method was seen to have similarities with reverie in chapter five and six, it does seem to involve treating the data as object rather then considering how one is subject to the other. The way the researcher interacts with both participants and the data seems to be another form of unknown, worth further research. There is also a question of whether and how reverie could be further developed and yet still be located within the limits of current research conventions. One example of how reverie pushes at these boundaries has occurred throughout this thesis where my reveries continually break through, perhaps at times usefully, so revealing something of the struggle but perhaps also as a hindrance, as obscuring some difficulties. Yet there are questions too about the extent to which conventions both reveal and conceal. Some examples of another way of analysing relational aspects of the interviews through reverie are now provided.

7.3 The Researcher and the Researched

On a number of occasions in the interviews I became aware of something occurring which I did not at the time recognise and as the data analysis progressed these phenomena became clearer but were difficult to include in the data analysis for two reasons. Firstly they did not initially appear to address the research question “how do psychotherapists learn about the unknown” at least from the perspective of the participants. Secondly it was difficult to account for them within the method which required identification of meaning units within the interview texts. This was largely due to the fact that the analysis of the interviews was still mostly based on content even though Giorgi (1985b) says this is a method rather than technique, as discussed in chapter five. I found that the method nevertheless appeared to address the said rather than the saying and had to keep ignoring my intuitive sense of something present in the saying but absent in the said, at least when read literally. What in particular contributed to this problem was the extracting of the participants’ text from the context of the interview and then providing a meta narrative about various themes without accounting for the interview as a relational activity. It seemed that the participants were not only telling me about their previous experiences of learning about the unknown, as meta narrative, they were speaking of their experiences in the here and now of the interview which was often apparent when the conversation
became intertwined. People were also speaking of their own pet theories which they wanted conveyed, and a startling phenomenon that I experienced was the sense that in talking of the unknown people revealed their personal struggles even, or especially, when they were clearly trying to conceal or thought they were open to revealing it. If thinking about the unknown has this effect it can only lead me to assume that this whole thesis is probably centred around my own story too.

A dilemma which I thought I had addressed was the extent to which the researcher was to be clearly seen as researcher rather than as therapist but confusion with this did arise perhaps because of the nature of the question. As I read the interviews it also seemed that people were telling me their problems with my question and approach and even ideas about how to analyse the data were present in the data again when not read too literally. These areas will be explored and are: knots in the relationship and pet theories which highlight implications about how the text speaks.

7.3.1 Knots in the Relationship

The relationship between researcher and researched appears to become polarised in the phenomenological method with the dominant position, in terms of data analysis and presentation of findings, ascribed to the participants and what they said. The researcher’s influence remains largely unsaid despite the interaction during interviews, the question which stems from the researcher’s imagination and the process of imaginative variation. Imaginative variation involves trying out phenomena in various situations during the individual case analyses and imagining all possible variations of learning about the unknown in order to identify whether a situation described by an individual qualifies as an instance, for the general description as suggested by Wertz (1985). I found this technique difficult to apply not least because so much is unknown and because my attention became caught up with these strategies rather than waiting to see what came to mind as the basis of reverie and phenomenology. In particular the processes involved in explicating the general structure of the phenomenon seemed themselves to be largely unknown and confusing. The way my own thoughts would emerge was a more mysterious process raising further questions about how we engage with data in order to understand it and present it to others and so the unknown emerges as the researcher’s unknowing of
their own learning process. Are the instructions about how the phenomenological researcher engages with the text an example of trying to make unknown processes appear to be known or knowable as reduced to the intentional? This is despite the way phenomenology requires engagement with the world as always learning anew.

Empirical phenomenological research appears to be concerned with data generated from the participants and the researcher's position can easily disappear. Even though the data analysis of the previous chapter was not intended to be generalisable it could be viewed as a meta narrative which is a story presumed to have generality or final apodictic truth (Lyotard 1984). Lyotard (1984) sees meta narrative as problematic because of the way people are removed from the discussion which shuts them up. What happens is the saying gets lost in the said. It is argued here that the interaction between researcher and researched and the ensuing entanglements create a different kind of data which is valuable in researching the unknown because something of the saying begins to emerge. Some examples now follow. There were variations on the theme of inter subjective knots that occurred. For example participants wanted to know my position especially in terms of theory while I was trying to understand theirs. It seemed this occurred especially at the beginning of interviews and, or when participants felt at a loss for words further into the interview, which they sometimes acknowledged. Generally I was able to explain that for the research I was interested in where they were coming from. It is noticeable though how patients also often want to know the therapist's perspective when they arrive at a frightening place in the therapeutic process. Whilst I thought my role as researcher was clear the interview process raises similar difficulties to the psychotherapeutic encounter. The issue of whether the interview was like therapy emerged most explicitly with Rachel as follows:

R: Yes and yet just now I was saying it, almost comfortable not knowing, so we are in a dichotomy now. And maybe it wouldn't be comforting knowing that I would be sat with all these people, maybe it would be quite difficult. Yes I feel I'm not being very helpful. I feel I'm not giving you what you, I don't know what you want.

J: I don't know what I want either. And um I mean I would imagine if I thought about it very hard there would be, there are always things you wish you could prove when you do research aren't there? But I hope that I might, at least a bit, be open to it not being quite how I want it or expected or you know?

R: Mm mm yes and isn't that difficult too, and that's a rhetorical question, that being open to not getting what you want. And so maybe you don't even know what you want in
the first place and maybe our clients come with not knowing what they want. I’m sure most of them don’t know what they want cause they don’t know what they are gonna get.

J: Do you think in a strange way, I mean I know this is a research interview, but in a strange way we are experiencing...

R: ...How it is to be a client. Yes I do, yes I’m sure that um when one is asked to talk about, when I am asked to talk about myself and my feelings it does feel a bit like that, because it again it is this undivided attention isn’t it? Is really quite difficult unless you’ve been with some one for a long time as a client and even then its difficult. And well what am I doing here, what am I doing here? I don’t know. I suppose there’s a desire to please to give you what you want if only I could work out what you want, and I think I know what you want, now that’s dangerous and how crazy is that.

J: Well what do you think I want?

R: I think you want to know how I feel about the unknown and where I learned about it. But I think its just been an evolving process within me that uh that I could certainly, I could lay at the door of education. The sort of education, the sort of education that I’ve had because it opened up my mind to thinking about the unknown um but is that what you want to hear? How? I mean I don’t know, I mean how I got there.

J: Yeah I actually think that, yes I did say clearly whether you think the unknown has played any part in your work and learning and how you’ve learned about it yes.

On the one hand it seemed that we needed clarification that this was a research interview and not therapy but on the other we were experiencing the difficulty of expectations where Rachel seemed unsure if what she was saying was what I expected. As this was a research interview it seemed important to acknowledge what I was asking which is different to therapy where the patient’s interests are the first concern. In some interviews, like this one, the struggling with expectations was experienced between researcher and participants and addressed explicitly whereas in other interviews it was spoken of as meta narrative in terms of the expectations between therapist and patient. It could be that in these latter cases there was an inference about the relationship between what was spoken about, and the here and now of the interview. One could for example link this to unconscious processes as in the therapeutic situation where experiences “back then” and “out there” relate to the “in here” of the therapeutic relationship (eg Malan 2001). This would however be another strategy of meta narrative where there is an attempt to legitimate the findings by comparing them to a grand theory (Kvale 1996). Rachel highlights the way she experiences a desire to please and so as in the therapeutic relationship power is at play but must this statement be externally justified in order to validate it?
In the extract below, with Martha, we seemed to get into a different kind of knot, a knot of knowing and then realised that we did not know what we were talking about, the unknown broke through and we became almost hysterical in trying to understand.

M: I'm, not, not only therapists, I mean doctors must do that. They must have domestic issues or, and they go in to do a major heart operation, they have got to close down they've got to close down part of them.

J: Mm. You have to close down something in order to open up something up else?

M: Yes, I that sounded, but in a way then you're suggesting that we've got from that interaction that we do have the mechanism for closing down those by choice almost?

J: Mm well that's just how it sounded.

M: Going back to your research then, you have the mechanisms for closing down or not, or opening up at a later stage.

J: Yes, and opening up to what and closing down what? I mean are we talking about the unknown how we might close off something known in order to be open to something unknown is that what we're saying?

M: I don't know I mean I'm just processing. All of a sudden I've got a block. Why? How do you close down to one? Do you have to close down to something known in order to be open to the unknown and is it an on off switch? I said that I might have a model in mind as I'm doing therapy as a guide but then I then bring to the forefront. Is that what I do is it at different levels? Are they the Gestalt back and forth foreground and background are they, or is it all working?

J: And I was wondering, I don't know if this is ok, but I was also wondering what blocked you then? And I was just intrigued by that something sort of blocked your thought and I wondered whether it was my question or or my?

M: I think it was that that Uhh because the feelings went and I went very much into the head.

First Martha attempts to link the ideas to the research and then the researcher picks this up and raises the question of the unknown. Then Martha asks a series of questions. It becomes unclear whose knot it is although she agrees that it is the question but perhaps it was a mixture of the researcher's questions and her own? Although it seems clear in the text, in the actual interview we lost track of who mentioned the idea of on/off which Martha then stated as a switch. Did something get switched between us? A different kind of experience happened and as Martha said maybe we became afraid, possibly that we did not know. The more I look at this section of text (the complete transcript is included in appendix two) the more confused it seems, it just falls apart. We lost the meaning. For example I am unclear whether it is the research question and researcher's questions that feel too invasive or whether Martha's questioning of herself creates too much muddle. What this does
illustrate is how too many threads of thought create a chiasma, a crossover that eventually becomes a knot of knowing.

At the interview stage with Sara the question and the researcher’s presence also had an impact. At the time the interview seemed to flow in a calm and thoughtful way but on transcribing the interview I began to experience something unbearable and had to keep having a break from the task. I was also surprised at how many questions I had asked and began to realise I had been caught up in something. Then on analysing the data in stages two and three I realised how much anxiety seemed to be present which became focussed around the words “opening” and “closing.” Sara had been speaking about certainty and the question of whether we know anything and how many of her clients, who have been adopted, do not have a sense of family history that leads to a search for identity which is tragic.

J: What do you think, that having not had an idea of where you came from or who you came from that sort of opens up these huge questions, or they’re more noticeable all of a sudden than if you think you do know?

S: I would think so yes, I would, I mean in my experience in my client work.

J: Yes I was just thinking that thinking you know where you came from might almost close down those kinds of questions, could be another way of looking at that.

S: Knowing where you came from closes down the question of what?

J: Of where did I come from, who am I?

S: Yes and the problem is?

J: Well its closed down.

S: Well its closed down. I mean what’s closed down? Does it mean it doesn’t necessarily reduce the fascination does it? Its closed down in that you know it doesn’t mean that. People, because they know, they don’t have an endless quest to know, to know more, and look at photographs and be hungry for information. No I think closing it down is not necessarily no.

J: So you think even if you haven’t got that lack of knowledge of your origins, even if you haven’t got that, you still are, you know you still ask those kinds of questions?

S: I was assuming when you said just now, that what you meant, the closing down was if you did know, and I was challenging that. I don’t think that would be necessarily the case. I would think, I would think there’s much more of a difficulty with someone who didn’t know because part of them a part of them would be longing to know and part of them not knowing what knowing would result in mm. Because there might be a tremendous shattering of their fantasy about their parents, so I guess there’s a tension of not knowing, of not knowing what we all know.

I think I was attempting to open up the question of whether thinking we know our history means we can close down questions of who am I, challenging her meta
narrative. Sara had spoken of what she called abstract questions, perhaps existential questions, earlier. In the extract above she seems to be saying that not knowing your history in a literal way, because you were adopted, leads to opening up these questions. I think what I forced on her momentarily was a glimpse of the uncertainty of whether we do know but she returns at the end to the idea that it is patients who do not know, as she does, their histories, and she perhaps closes down the possibility for her own doubts. The text above also cannot convey the feeling of being in a tangle. Sara is challenging me too which I did not really experience in the interview. On transcribing I felt deadness and her tone of voice was almost inaudible and calm (dead) and in the words is a hint of attack of my queries. I now wonder if I was dead to Sara as well as picking up her deadness in needing to stick to her story. A few minutes before the above interaction she had said how she has to watch that she doesn’t impose her story on her clients and she is right but cannot see that she can only return to her own narrative. Perhaps she was also telling me that I was doing the same. In fact early on in the interview she had said that she was looking at the unknown in a concrete way, as related to her self, rather than in an abstract way which might be what the researcher wants. Maybe this was a warning and later she says how knowing your past keeps you safe. My experience with Martha was that we became tangled and caught up together whereas with Sara we felt disconnected.

What is even more confusing is that if I had been the therapist in such an encounter I would probably have realised how such comments can be a warning, not asked such questions or pushed because I know how that can block the other’s thought. In my attempt to remember there is a difference between the role of researcher and therapist I forgot that some of the abilities of the therapist may be helpful, for example in more consideration and acceptance of the other’s difficulties. I think I was also caught up in trying to understand Sara’s position and when I did not I asked too many questions which perhaps revealed my own position when unknowing. Behind this obsessive questioning is still something else which only emerges as I write and for which I have no evidence, except my own experience of being in the room with Sara and recognising that my own deadness hid my feeling afraid at how little of her existence there was in the room. In spite of, or perhaps because of, this kind of struggle something more alive about the unknown emerges such as how wanting to know or thinking we know closes down the unknown of our own position in relation to others.
The implications of interaction between researcher and researched is much more difficult to explore through Giorgi’s (1985a, 1985b) method than what the participants say about their learning. These examples also point to Foucault’s (1977) problem with phenomenological method where an individual (eg Sara) is reduced to the evolution of their history, rather than exploration of the ways such historical discourses can be shown to reveal how power acts to sustain a dominant discourse. Whilst these three examples are not exhaustive they do illustrate something of the live discourse between researcher and participants and may be of more relevance to researching the unknown than what we spoke about. Ogden (1997) argues that reverie especially helps one to be alive to such experiences of aliveness or deadness to the other stressing the importance of experience in relation to the other and this idea is supported here. The three interactions above are examples of another way of engaging with the interview texts and raise important ideas about the unknown that need further research. These are, respectively: Is it when we meet our own confusion or unknowing that we attempt to know the other’s position, do too many lines of thought lead to a point where knowing falls apart and is history a story used to conceal what we do not know or do not want to know?

7.3.2 Pet Theories

Another kind of experience in the interviews was where participants spoke more about their own theories of the unknown which they wanted to convey. Sometimes this was clearly spelled out as a new idea and sometimes woven in with a startling openness about their personal difficulties. What is revealed and what concealed does not necessarily, however, correspond to what people are open about and what they prefer to close down. Paul for example went to great pains to set out his theory of the difference between the unknown and the unknowable frequently checking out whether I understood. My experience of the interview was that I was being instructed and although I did ask about his experience of learning felt he wanted to teach me. My initial feeling was that my research was encroaching on his ideas although this may also be my anxiety that he has pre empted my research. Alternatively if one takes the view, as in the therapeutic situation, that what the person is saying infers something of
their own experience anyway what might seem to be concealed may begin to be revealed.

P: Yes well, that's why I'm trying to make that distinction between the known and the unknowable.

J: I suppose what this sort of brings me to is the other part of my question which, which I'm just, has just come back to me, which is how have you come to this, how have? I could say how have you learned about this but I mean learning in its very broadest sense. How have you come to this way of understanding this you know?

P: Well very little has come from formal training. So I'm a great believer in what most people end up finding useful actually hasn't come from anything they've been formally taught, and I stress the word formally. Cause if I was to look back at things that have moved me on, some of them were things, some of them were things said by trainers and teachers and therapists, but they weren't said as something they were planning to say necessarily.

J: Right

P: They were often asides in the coffee break or a bit of humour dropped in, you know what I man, and that, that's. I'll come back to your question, but that affects the way I teach things. Um I don't like overly set curricula, I don't believe in them. You know, some of the trainers I see, they want, you know, what am I sposed to cover? You get ten minutes for this, and fifteen minutes for that. I don't like working in that way because I think it um, it stops the interesting highways and bye ways where people do their real learning. I'm much more interested in this sort of training, um that people come out with some imagination and depth, with instinct for something rather than them having pursued a formal sort of curriculum. And I'm also in favour of bringing in references to things which are nothing to do with therapy. So um I encourage people to bring in experiences from books and films and travel and just observations of the world. Now if I look at myself, some of its unknowable where I get things from, its just me. Other things, I think are to do with what I choose to observe in everyday life. And I think you can go a long way by watching what it is that people are open to and what they observe. That makes the difference about what they learn. Now peoples' ability to observe I think cuts across, I think is a great leveller because it doesn't reduce people to those people who are academic and those who are non academic. A lot of people come into training thinking, oh, I'm not academic enough or blah blah blah because I have to do all these essays and read all these books whereas in fact things that make a difference are peoples' ability to observe and make something of their observations, whether internal observations or external observations. And that's not, I don't think that's a function of um any formalised system of intelligence, what it is that people pick up on along the way, it doesn't matter whether you've got x number of degrees or not, an o level. There will still be things you observe and can make use of.

What comes to mind here is the dichotomy between teaching and learning, for example as Rogers (1983) highlighted what is taught does not correspond with what is learned. Firstly Paul is clearly saying that he learned mostly from moments where something spontaneous was said and this kind of data is included in the previous chapter in the theme “the unknown in training”. Having said this, however, he does not elaborate explicitly on his own experiences instead explaining how he teaches shifting to expressing his concerns about people who may not feel academic enough. Elsewhere in the text he speaks of the way students idealise their teachers. He tells
the story of Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz accusing the wizard of being a bad man and
the wizard responds saying "I am a good man but a bad wizard." While he recognises
the importance of such disillusionment it is not clear whether he sees any link with his
own story and how his ideas are used as a meta narrative. I cannot claim to know
Paul's story although possible conclusions can be drawn from the interaction. When
my initial take that the power in the interview lay with him is reversed I can instead
wonder whether he viewed the power as with me given my background in the
university setting and undertaking my PhD. The switch can occur when one feels
someone else has more power and acts to try and reverse that. Again I found this
aspect of the data was difficult to notice when struggling with the method in the
previous chapter and this way of thinking about the text has only just occurred to me
at the time of writing this, after the initial data analysis. Other versions may yet
emerge later given the nature of afterwardsness (eg Laplanche 1999) as discussed in
chapters three and five. This take on the idea of a switch might also add another
dimension to the interaction with Martha above.

My experience with Kevin has some similarities to the interview with Paul. Kevin
was able to speak very openly about his life as well as his concerns with theory.
There is also a sense that something otherwise was occurring that I cannot locate in
any particular part of the said of the interview text except in terms of the proportion of
text taken up by each of us as the saying. What I make of that interview comes from
my experience of it which is remembered on reading the transcribed interview. As
with Paul not only was I reluctant to speak or ask questions there was little space
allowed for me to so do. Again I cannot claim to know what was occurring but
wonder who I represented and is this connected to the place I take up in the world
inexplicably linked to the subject chosen for research? On noticing that these
comments are related to two of the men interviewed gender may be implicated and the
place each person takes up in this. Also as Rachel pointed out the unknown leaves
you facing yourself. I felt moved by his struggle and yet concerned about whether
and how this material should be included. Although Kevin said he was happy to
reveal his personal story I did not want to reveal all in the data analysis which felt like
I would be committing violence and struggled with the ethical dilemma of how to put
him first. I still do not know whether I repeated some violent act towards him in the
way the material from the interview was presented. The above examples begin to
highlight the way power threads its way through the interaction providing clues to the story within the story but as Paul pointed out there are always aspects of a situation and each other that we just do not know.

7.3.3 The Text Speaks

In reviewing the above interactions I have begun to feel more playful and my own reveries have begun to emerge such as my fear with Sara which becomes known. It seems possible that feeling freer to think is the result of not having a complicated method to follow so instead of putting Giorgi's (1985a, 1985b) method first I begin to put the data first and recognise where I couldn't put the other first in the interviews. There are areas such as with Martha that the text, and perhaps the relationship, becomes too tangled and the recognition that we do not know disrupts our discourse. In the examples with Paul and Kevin the need to tell our own story emerges and while they speak about the unknown and their experience of it, the experience in the room in the relationship is both more obscured and yet more revealing. It is not the intention to polarise the above issues as occurring only in certain texts, some issues were just more obvious in some than in others. A contention would be that with further analysis these relational aspects could be shown to be at play in other texts and their relevance to the unknown demonstrated.

What the above analysis also begins to reveal is some of the ways in which people conceal how the telling of their stories is a way of preventing the unknown from putting in an appearance. Becoming tangled with the other or preventing the other from interrupting the story sustains the story or as Blanchot (1993) argues allows the eternal return whereas the other who represents the unknown might disrupt the circularity. For example one way of viewing the interaction with Sara is that it illustrates the return as wanting to avoid the unknown of the future (death) by returning to her history. This return is a problem inherent in interviews which call for a meta discourse of the interviewee prompted by the questions of the interviewer leading to logical formalizations which Irigaray (1996) argues foreclose on dialogue. The analysis of the interview could also succumb to the same problem where the researcher sustains their own story or as in meta narrative keeps the participants silent.
The interview transcript as text can be allowed to speak through deconstruction which attempts to kill the author as the creator of binary oppositions (Sarup 1993). Such oppositions could be seen to prevent the unknown because they are binding. In the case of a transcript of an interview one could argue there is co-authorship. In order to read and interrogate the text in this way one has to find moments in the dialogue where meaning falls apart and this cannot be done through analysis of meaning as units of meaning where the text has already been carved up and presented as meta-narrative. The text has to be read in such a way as to allow the intersubjective where meaning is co-constructed by researcher and participants. This means reading the text as allegorical as “a narrative description of subject under guise of another suggestively similar” (Pearsall 1999). Again and again through re-reading the text it has become clear that one does not need a complex method in order to be thoughtful, phenomenology already teaches us to delay understanding, dwell with phenomena and our experience of them and attend to our unknowing (Merleau-Ponty 1962). Through the text as phenomenon and dialogue with it the other will speak to us and will also teach us how to read it. The text becomes the teacher. In telling their own story of learning about the unknown the other tells you how to read the text. For example: Martha says learning about the unknown occurs for her in a relationship where the other is willing to learn too, Paul points out how his experience of learning comes from throw away remarks and not over prepared lessons and for Dave life and living is the teacher. These ideas highlight learning about the unknown and can be seen to require the researcher to engage in the data, live with it and be willing to learn anew each time rather than dividing the statements into fragmented themes.

It is suggested that the phenomenological method (Giorgi 1975, 1985a), whilst revealing one kind of meaning as the said, conceals the binding in the relationship and prevents the saying from emerging through it. One cannot hear the unknown in stories by giving primacy to the method but perhaps reverie comes closer to not putting the method first.

7.4 Phenomenology and the Phenomenological Research Method

In chapter six the interview transcripts were analysed in order to reveal “how do psychotherapists learn about the unknown”? Following discrimination of units of
meaning and summarising salient features and meanings the findings were presented in two ways. Firstly as how individuals responded to the question presented as individual portraits and; secondly as a general description of the phenomenon comprising seven themes: “The unknown from the known,” “The unknown from training,” “The unknown from personal therapy and supervision,” “The unknown in practice,” “Life and living,” “The spiritual/mystical unknown” and “Fear of death”. Each of these themes was presented along with quotations from the participants in order to illustrate something of the variety of experiences within each theme. As mentioned in chapter six and discussed earlier in this chapter a number of problems arose because of the interpersonal elements of an interview which the phenomenological method of Giorgi did not appear to address (Giorgi 1985b, Wertz 1985). Kvale (1996) highlights two interrelated issues, as identified through the researcher’s experience above, which are the way interviews are co authored and how treating interviews as transcripts can have the effect of losing the living conversation especially when fragmented quotations are used to fix meaning.

It is often in the small, almost throw away, remarks the assumptions underpinning a rationale can be disclosed. The reason that the participant’s descriptions, in this case as interview transcripts, is broken down into meaning units appears to stem from the premise “Since one cannot analyze a whole text simultaneously, one has to break it down into manageable units” (Giorgi 1985a:11). It is difficult to see how this statement equates with Giorgi’s (1985a) idea that the units identified are constituents rather than elements of meaning the difference being that the former is context laden whilst the latter is independent of context. It is proposed that once a unit of meaning is delineated it becomes isolated, the text has been removed from and therefore of its context, in particular the interpersonal context of an interview. Further the researcher is required to select out units of meaning which are not relevant to the phenomenon being studied. The discussion of reverie in chapter five has, however, already argued that an utterance that seems the least relevant, such as a throw away comment, can in fact be particularly pertinent and so one needs to continually delay making such decisions. It had been intended that reverie would enable the text to be analysed but the fragmentation caused by the technique of the phenomenological method hinders the free floating attention required for reverie. This free floating attention was argued in chapter five as phenomenological because it does not reach for meaning and also
delays selecting any aspect of a text as more relevant than another. Instead of breaking the text apart perhaps it can be allowed to fall apart, revealing moments of tension, and reverie was found to be more helpful in that.

Kvale (1996: 182) suggests engaging in a dialogue with the text as "an imagined conversation with the 'author' about the meaning of the text". In 7.3 above the researcher began a dialogue with the text in order to provide some examples of how meaning collapses at points in the text as well as how meaning can be concealed which seemed to have more relevance for researching the unknown. Noticing where the unknown is concealed and yet in play comes from having read the whole interview and revisiting the researcher's experience of the interview. Whilst points in the text are utilised to illustrate the emergent interpersonal phenomena reverie also allows for consideration of the whole text. For example, Ogden (1997) shows how reveries are built up over time by a process of continually asking how an interaction, whether as interview or text, is experienced. Reverie requires a different kind of temporal spatial thought where patience is required so that meaning can come towards us and surprise us. Not all conscious experience can be accounted for by intentionality, as consciousness of something (Moustakas 1994), which seems to infer we always know what our attention is directed to. Reverie, with its requirement for negative capability allows for other kinds of experience, not necessarily defined as unconscious, such as when our mind goes blank, when we do not know what we are experiencing or when an idea just appears. Reverie also allows us to learn in the living situation by permitting the data to speak to us as in chapter four where it was argued that within psychoanalysis the subject becomes the teacher rather than the object of teaching (Felman 1987). In 7.3.3 some examples were given of how the text taught the researcher how to read the text.

As argued above one does not need a complex method in order to be thoughtful phenomenology already teaches us to delay understanding, dwell with phenomena and our experience of them and attend to our unknowing. It is here argued that phenomenological methods (eg Giorgi 1975, 1985a) are technical and reduce phenomenology to technique in order to separate phenomenology from philosophy. Blanchot (1993) argues that this is the lot of the researcher who as well as teaching:
"is a man of science and his knowledge is bound to the always collective forms of specialized research; psychoanalysis (a science of the non-knowing), the social sciences, and basic scientific research" (Blanchot 1993:5)

Whereas teaching might be based on the research of the master the philosopher is the master who does not just teach what is known, even within the context of relationship, and according to Blanchot (1993:5) therefore "The master represents a region of time and space that is absolutely other" and hence the philosopher as teacher represents the unknown and disrupts the known. In separating phenomenological method from phenomenology as philosophy the ability to disrupt knowing by unknowing succumbs to the need to know and validate the knowing. This study is arguing, therefore, for a return to phenomenology without overlaying technical procedures, raising a question of whether it is necessary to undertake the empirical phenomenological analysis, such as that of Giorgi (1975, 1985a) before the analysis based on reverie. The term phenomenological method is tautology because phenomenology is already methodical without being a technique. Reverie may help in developing a phenomenological attitude but it is not the intention to reduce reverie to a set of stages or processes. Further research is required to develop phenomenology through reverie.

A number of issues suggest that interviews may also not be the most appropriate way to explore the unknown or the relational, phenomenologically. Firstly the nature of interviews is such that they tend to precipitate a way of saying the already said through meta narrative as grand theories or pet theories or meta discourse where we seek to reinforce our own story, both researcher and researched in a return to the centre. Beginning with a question tends to already infer something of the way to respond and as Rachel pointed out a desire to meet the other’s expectations ensues. Secondly, following on from the previous issues the living experience of learning about the unknown, as described by participants in chapter six and the argument above that the unknown is alive more in the relationship between researcher and researched, seems to result to some extent, from the way one is disrupted by the other through the relational. Partly due to the one off situation of interviews they become narrative and close possibility for such disruption. In any case it is viewed as unethical to invite someone to come and talk about their experience in an interview in order to disrupt their talk. Further one cannot set up the appearance of the unknown. Thirdly asking a question was shown above to hinder reverie because participants
worried more about answering the question or inferring they know the unknown, rather than allowing the wandering of their imagination. Not only did participants speak of life but also of death and associated philosophical questions about how we cannot know death. For Levinas (2001:121) any question about death and the unknown must begin with "I do not know" because "it is more otherwise than any [other] unknown". Even beginning by saying "I do not know" would, however, be an attempt to reduce the unknown to the intentional. Fourthly, although Kvale (1996) warns the researcher to beware of transcripts, it is easy to treat the interview as transcript and forget that the map is not the terrain (again participants point this out) although the researcher’s experience of the interview is helpful in this regard. Fifthly because Giorgi’s (1975, 1985a) method is located more in transcendental phenomenology it is difficult to recognise the researcher's impact on the data and more importantly hinders the possibility of the other. In fact there does not appear to be a phenomenological method that can allow the possibility of the researcher’s experience whilst also consideration of when to set that aside appropriately. In a living situation one does not pre plan when to act and when to stand back, one either just knows intuitively or makes a mistake that has to be lived and worked with. In life we have to learn anew in each situation, which after all is the possibility of phenomenology.

Hollway and Jefferson (2000) highlight a major difference between research and therapy as being the way researchers interpret the data after the encounter whereas therapists interpret during the encounter. They are therefore making a distinction between data analysis and data production although also acknowledge that such distinctions do break down when we ask participants more detailed questions (Hollway and Jefferson 2001). They also locate free association, which has similarities to reverie, within a narrative method arguing this "stays closer to actual life events than methods that elicit explanations" (Hollway and Jefferson 2001:32). This combination then allows them to show how anxiety can lead to a re telling of an already known story in order to enable the individual to feel safe. This is also highlighted with the participant Sara in 7.3.1. It is argued here, however, that interviews set up a situation, through narrative, where the opacity of stories is sustained which raises ethical questions about the researcher’s role in reinforcing rather than opening up issues. Are interviews, therefore, ethical when researching the
unknown? Again the data in this study speaks where Rachel, for example in 6.3.2, questioned whether the stories we tell about our history are ever about what actually happened.

In view of the difficulties with the method and the nature of interviews it would seem appropriate to find ways of researching the unknown that do not have to start with a question and can permit "I do not know" which does not support opening with a question or the closure of narratives. The problem with this idea is that in starting with anything we start with our intention as knowing the unknown whereas the unknown finds a different way. Nevertheless developing phenomenology could proceed in two ways. Firstly exploring reverie in ways where research does not end up returning learning about the unknown to a grand narrative such as the unconscious, as in psycho analysis which leaves it open to confusion between research and therapy or a return to the centre as in the humanistic tradition where knowing closes down the potential for disruption by the other. The examples of data analysis, drawing on reverie in 7.3, began to highlight a way of analysing the text at the level of discourse. One way of developing and questioning the limitations of reverie would be to undertake further data analysis of findings, such as those in 7.3, through discourse analysis which has the possibility of revealing aspects that reverie conceals. This is because discourse is concerned with the way people form and reform their stories as a result, for example, of power and desire (Loewenthal 1996) drawing attention to the instability of language as it is used to construct reality (Dickerson 1996). According to Potter (1997:146) "versions of the world, of society, events and inner psychological worlds are produced in discourse" lending discourse analysis to exploration of the way participants and researcher construct meaning and undermine each other. Discourse analysis may also be helpful in opening up ways in which the researcher has positioned the unknown as an 'alternative' discourse. Parker (1999) for example highlights how such 'alternatives' may be set up in reaction to power and yet reinforce the status quo due to failure to recognise the relational aspects. For example, the way power operates in both directions in the master slave dialectic. Here questions arise about my position, for example, as a woman, and whether by offering an 'alternative' discourse to knowing I have simply reinforced that position as other.
Secondly there is the possibility of exploring alternative ways, to interviewing, of gathering data. One area for consideration would be participant or non participant observation as developed through anthropological approaches to ethnography. This is because ethnography is concerned with first hand observation of the interaction within groups set within their cultural context (Moustakas 1994) and which might be a way to begin addressing Foucault’s (1980) argument that power and historicity should not be bracketed out. In order to undertake an ethnographic study the researcher gains intimate knowledge of the situation through direct observation and first hand experience, including their relationships with others, and their perceptions and experiences may also contribute to understanding a situation (Patton 1990). In this approach there appears to be a major concern with context, culture and intersubjectivity and the possibility for further engagement with the dilemma between the bracketing required in transcendental phenomenology and drawing on the researcher’s experience as in hermeneutic phenomenology. The potential for ethnography to allow data to be gathered from live situations where some of the ethical dilemmas are already being worked with, such as the learning situations described by participants in chapter six, might also illustrate where people are actively engaged in questioning their own narratives or what conditions allow those narratives to be disrupted. Another advantage here would be that observation may work with reverie which requires the researcher to be thoughtful over time, in the way that Ogden (1997) illustrates, where the realisation of the meanings of an image or idea can take many months to be noticed let alone understood. It is acknowledged that the problems of meta narrative and meta discourse cannot be eradicated. It is suggested, however, that we may be able to explore ways in which they can become more noticeable especially in concealing the myriad variations of the unknown and where the allegorical, from the Greek (Hoad 1996), nature of language can be revealed as “speaking otherwise”.

7.5 Conclusions

The main aim of this thesis was “developing a methodology exploring the unknown in the acquisition of therapeutic knowledge” and to explore whether phenomenology could usefully be taken as a starting point in exploration of the idea of the unknown. As a starting point the phenomenological perspective was explicating in order to then
question other approaches to the unknown in turn questioning phenomenology. What emerged were the kinds of dialectic where each position limits understanding within its theoretical framework losing sight of the limits and the possibility for something that lies hither. For example conscious experience related in phenomenology as it is to intentionality and the noema and noesis (eg Husserl 1960) limits consciousness to the known of what and how things appear to consciousness and yet consciousness is also horizontal and therefore essentially unknown. The concept of the unconscious (eg Freud 1915) puts a frame around certain kinds of unknown experiences albeit as opposed to conscious experiences. Each could be viewed as one way of addressing one aspect of such phenomena. In being concerned with intersubjectivity the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty (1962, 1964b) appeared to add another dimension to such experiences, that is as interpersonal. There was a question of whether phenomenological research methods (Becker 1992, Giorgi 1975, 1985) would prove helpful in revealing aspects of experience related to the unknown and intersubjectivity and whether this could be improved through reverie.

A major part of this project has been a contribution to the exploration of the unknown by considering ways in which the unknown has been conceptualised. A further contribution has been to move beyond theoretical deliberations in being the only empirical study, other than Pramling et al (2003), researching the unknown. The conceptual analysis of chapter three illustrates two broad approaches to explaining the unknown by considering the known of the unknown (eg Freud 1915, 1923, Bion 1962, 1970, Lacan 1977a, 1977b) compared to the way others attempt to hold open the question of the unknown of the unknown (eg Kierkegaard 1944, 1956, Derrida 1978, 1990, Levinas 1983, 1984, irigaray 1996, 1999). The analysis of learning about the unknown in psychotherapy training, in chapter four, suggests that learning about the unknown is not concerned with psychotherapy as an object to be taught but as experience in which to dwell and yet also permit the possibility of the other in disturbing the already said of our own story as well as theory. One empirical phenomenological study, researching the unknown, was found (Pramling et al 2003) which substituted the unknown with a character the 'heffalump.' The findings of Pramling et al (2003) has resonance with this project where the research was seen to support the idea that the unknown like a ‘gap’ in a text reveals something about the readers’ personal struggles in the way they attempt to construct meaning and create
something known from something previously unknown. It does not however address further complexities of the unknown as knowable or the unknown as unknowable. Whilst the substitution of the unknown is understandable, given that the research was with children, it did not appear able to explore the relational in terms of the researcher-researched or the teacher-learner interaction. There also did not appear to be an intention to develop phenomenology as in this study.

The exemplar for locating and limiting the study was the question "how do psychotherapists learn about the unknown?" As such there are two main intentions about which to draw conclusions: firstly what has the research revealed about learning about the unknown, implications for training and the possibilities for further research and; secondly how has this informed the development of a methodology for ongoing exploration of the unknown? Conclusions will now be drawn about each of these two areas. The research was intended to provide findings that have possibility rather than those which are generalizable, as discussed in 5.3.2, and to highlight how such findings might help the development of phenomenology. Additionally all those who came forward to be interviewed could be said to already be interested in such ideas so those who might question the question could be seen to be excluded. Whilst further research would be open to such debate, at this stage there was a need to engage with others who felt able to talk about the unknown in order to begin to identify some areas of a field of inquiry.

With regard to the first intention, therefore, the findings presented in chapter six are seen as one way to identify some aspects of how psychotherapists learn about the unknown and the alternative analyses of chapter seven another, pointing to directions for future research. In summary the findings of chapter six seem to suggest that the unknown cannot be taught but is learned during a process of lifelong enquiry through a number of interrelated experiences including: the known such as theory, some aspects of training, therapy and supervision, practice and life and living. Eventually this process seems to lead to recognition of spiritual or mystical experiences that cannot be defined, but are found in everyday ordinary experiences as well as profound, opening up hope in the face of our fear of death. Immersion in experience and relationships with others, where unspeakable fears such as madness and death can be spoken, can be especially important in enabling us to learn how to learn from such
living experiences. Repeated disillusionment seems eventually to lead to a realisation that nothing can explain everything and after continual searching for answers despair has to be faced. In facing these disappointments the unknown as unknowable, as death can be borne.

A number of further findings about learning to be a psychotherapist emerged from the detranslation (in 7.3), of the findings of chapter six, which drew on reverie and appeared to be more connected to the saying as it emerged through the said, including the unsaid. One finding that emerged through the researcher participant relationship was the way the researcher represented the unknown which seems similar to Blanchot’s (1993) ideas about the way the unknower creates disruption. For example Blanchot (1993) considers the way discontinuities have an effect similar to the unknown, acting as a reminder of death. Such reminders that leave us avoiding our despair are present in Kierkegaard’s (1985) thought, discussed in chapter three. These findings also illustrate the way the unknown other disrupts the known linking with Levinas’ (1984) ideas about the possibility of otherness in opening us to new ideas and experience, instead of continuously replaying known experiences. There were also significant absences in what people chose to speak of which have only emerged at this stage of writing up the thesis. Whilst training was addressed, few spoke of being taught and no one spoke of being taught skills. There was much more emphasis on learning from experience, or the experiences of unplanned comments made by tutors and the qualities of the teacher in being prepared to be unprepared. These findings have implications for the provision of training in a climate that places increasing emphasis on course content (BACP 2005, BPS 2001, 2004, EAP 1999), perhaps at the expense of allowing time and space for the kind of interpersonal interaction that disrupts the known of obsessive thinking and permits thoughtfulness.

In chapter six the findings illustrated how learning about theory seemed to be helpful in drawing attention to unknown aspects of experience and in giving permission for unknowing. In the detranslation in 7.3, through reverie, the return of the unknown to the known, such as theory of the unconscious was seen to occur. There are questions here about whether theory is taught in such a way that the already said is more important than the saying. There are implications here for the possibility of the kind of learning environment that might enable the saying to emerge through the said of
theory rather than learning as a repetition of the already said. There are a number of directions for future research in terms of the roles of theory, skills, experience and the teacher in learning about the unknown, not so much as subject but as a question of how we can experience the unknown.

With regard to the second intention the way the findings inform the development of a methodology for ongoing exploration of the unknown needs clarification. In chapter six the above findings were presented using the empirical phenomenological method of Giorgi (1975, 1985a) with some adaptations from Becker (1992) and drawing on processes of imaginative variation. In chapter seven some limitations of the data analysis were considered and examples of a different approach to analysing similar issues, through reverie, revealed other readings of the interview as text. The analysis in chapter six could be viewed as a representation of the said where primacy is given to the noematic aspect of intentionality over the noetic, la langue over la parole, the symbolic over the semiotic. The dominant partner in each binary opposition tends to have stabilising effect whereas the other is subversive or destabilising. In the de translation of chapter seven some of the instabilities and uncertainties of multiple readings came more into focus through the relationship between researcher and participants. For example where the relationship became close or intertwined meaning was shown to fall apart and this relationship seemed to have less need for the safety of sustaining a meta narrative although it is acknowledged that this might be just a different kind of discourse more familiar and hence less noticeable to the researcher. In relationships where more distance was maintained the story was held together as a meta narrative which serves to protect the speaker from anxiety, although this did disturb my equanimity provoking the need to look again and question the way power was at play and my own motives. The issues presented as the said in chapter six were also revealed in the saying of the interview as analysed in chapter seven. The said can, therefore, reveal the saying when read in a more allegorical way. It is suggested that the participants were living their struggles with learning about the unknown in the interview and in fact the participants again and again pointed to learning about the unknown as learning from life. The interview as a living relationship raises questions about how the researcher responds ethically at the time of the saying and later at the time of the said and this was different each time. It does seem simplistic, however to merely say that the role of the researcher is different
to the role of therapist. A bit less clarity might have enabled me to be a bit more sensitive to participants’ difficulties, not to respond as a therapist perhaps, but at least to notice.

The differences between the translation of the data in chapter six and the de-translation in chapter seven have opened up a number of problems with interviews and the method of analysis. A major question concerns how it might be possible to research the unknown as a living process where ethical dilemmas and interpersonal disruptions occur as part of a living rather than lived experience. In the detranslation of the text the researcher’s impact on the text becomes somewhat clearer rather than being kept in the background and relational phenomena become a different focus that has more relevance to the way participants felt they learned about the unknown. An individual story is seen to be bound in historical meta-narrative because the subject is extracted from the very context, culture and intersubjective experience that constitutes, much as Foucault (1972, 1986) warns. It has been argued elsewhere that a relational research method is required for exploring learning about the unknown because it is argued that participants’ and the researcher’s experience highlight it as a relational phenomenon arising when one disrupts the other’s thought and intentionality collapses (Cayne and Loewenthal in Loewenthal et al 2005).

Some kinds of relationship can tolerate the falling apart of meaning revealing how we learn to tolerate the unknown. Research methods, in much the same manner, may conceal or reveal how meaning disintegrates. This highlights Foucault’s (1986) concern with transcendental phenomenology replaying an empirical and historical repetition ignoring the way power operates in research. The method of fragmenting the text Giorgi’s (1975, 1985a) was shown, for example, to rest on a fault line composed of an assumption of the obvious whereas phenomenology demands re-reading the obvious, continually. By fragmenting the text the context of meaning units as constituted in the relationship of the interview were to some extent lost. Perhaps the personal difficulty is also present in the empirical method where the unbearable problem of collapse of meaning needs to be avoided. It is here argued that learning about the unknown, as researcher as well as revealed by participants, requires willingness to inquire into nonsense. Further research is required in order to continue to explore the relational aspects of the unknown though different methods of inquiry.
Phenomenology is already a method and questions about whether phenomenology can be developed without overlaying another method need to be explored. On the other hand the phenomenological method of Giorgi (1985a) was helpful in familiarising me with the data and possible links and differences between ideas and participants. It is therefore unclear as to what extent this aided understanding in the analysis through reverie in 7.3. Further research could explore the differences between drawing on reverie alone to analyse the text compared to analysis following a method such as Giorgi’s (1985a). Reverie has been argued as remaining open to the relationship attempting an intertextual analysis of encounter. Some suggestions for setting reverie within the context of anthropology such as research methods associated with ethnography have also been proposed. Whilst no method can mirror life events, because as soon as the saying becomes the said it is subject to the other, a method that can reveal something of how meaning is disrupted or stabilised in social settings may be more relevant to researching the unknown than interviews. Such an approach might also address the difficulties of pre empting reverie with a question, although it was shown in 6.3 that the question can be temporarily bracketed. The extent to which reverie is helpful at the stage of data collection also needs further research.

The analysis using reverie in 7.3 has also illustrated something of the way we are subject to the unknown and how this emerges within, for example, discourses of: power (Foucault 1980), otherness (Levinas 1984) and desire (Lacan 1977b). Just as the analysis based on reverie was shown to reveal interpersonal elements concealed by the phenomenological method it would be useful to undertake another analysis of the findings in 7.3 in order to reveal limitations of reverie. One possibility is to undertake another translation of the entire findings drawing on reverie and then to undertake a detranslation of these findings through discourse analysis which has the possibility to reveal aspects of discourse concealed by reverie.

Whilst there are clear intentions in a project such as this there are always findings that illustrate something of the researcher’s difficulties. In interviewing and analysing the interviews, in hearing the other, I also had to face my own struggles and the recognition that this thesis was always in danger of reducing others to my meta narrative. One way of viewing how I may replay my own struggle has transpired
through the unknown as a play for power or status, set up as an ‘alternative’ discourse which Parker (1999) argues merely reinforces the status quo. It may be, therefore, that discourse analysis (e.g. Burman and Parker 1993, Potter 1997) is particularly important in the development of reverie in research. Whilst reverie has possibility there is, however, the problematic of reducing reverie to the intentional of a method in much the same way that phenomenology has been reduced to a method that anticipates itself. It is just this kind of procedural approach that Merleau-Ponty (1962:xx.) argues against, reinstating phenomenology already as method.

Another question arises in the way the findings in chapter six made such sense to my own learning experience that I became suspicious of how this has become more about my own spiritual journey, as dialectic between life and death, revealed in the way I am caught up with phenomenology. Whilst psychoanalysis does influence my thinking I would question whether I have to put such theory before the other or the relationship. The dialectic between phenomenology and post modernism does at least help that problematic to emerge. There were moments in the interviews that revealed these struggles, when my story was disrupted by the other as discussed in 7.2 and 7.3. In the process a tension between knowing and unknowing emerges continually and I am caught in attempting to demonstrate I know the unknown and this has been most apparent when I do not understand. There is temptation to try and be the one who knows about the unknown. And yet it is in the encounter with others that one’s own anxieties are revealed through obsessive questions (7.3.1) or the inability to recognise one’s own entanglement with power (7.3.2). One cannot directly tell a story about the unknown yet there are different ways to not tell a story about the unknown and this project is one way of telling a story about a story that can never fully be told.
Research into the Unknown

My name is Julia Cayne and I am a UKCP reg. psychotherapist undertaking the final part of my PhD studies at the University of Surrey.

I am investigating therapists' experience of the unknown and am now inviting therapists (who are registered with BCP/UKCP/BACP/BPS) to participate in an unstructured interview of about a one hour duration.

The opening question will be something to the effect of: “do you feel you have learned about the unknown, and if so how”?

If you would like further information or to participate then please contact me on:

01420 85539
or
jvcayne@aol.com
APPENDIX TWO – Transcript of interview for one participant

Martha:

J: Do you want me to say again what I wrote to you or are you =
M: Is it on, no lets just go with it? The theory, no, the (.) subject is the unknown in all sorts of aspects?
J: Yes
M: In all sorts of aspects anywhere, not specifically
J: No
M: there’ll be my tendency to want a structure which is important.
J: I mean I spose my research is set within the field of psychotherapy and counselling um, its set within but I’m not even clear what the boundary around that is
M: ok
J: So I’m kind of open to that.
M: Its just when you said it to me I was thinking what is the unknown cause if its the unknown you don’t know, it’s the unknown, in a way (.) its like Johari window, there’s one element the quarter that you don’t know (.) because its unknown to you, so when would you pick up what it is that you unknown in a philosophical way where would you pick that up unless its not (.) unless its unknown in a particular dimension for instance in the conscious, if it was unknown in the conscious but its known somewhere else in the subconscious then is it unknown? (.) (chuckles) um so (.) I was trying to get my mind round that and then I was thinking about (.) oh, what clients bring about unknown (.) um what is unknown when they come to see us. Uh, quite often unknown is the outcome and outcome is already putting structure on it and depending on what theory you work with if you’re totally person centred you would just start and somewhere along the line you would end (.) but that would not necessarily be um(.3) well it would but how do you know that you’re coming to the end (.) I suppose I’m struggling a little bit here (.) but uh (.5) I spose that’s as much a feeling of unknown it feels as if feels as though its to explode almost to pick up what it is where it is, what does it look like where do you search for it (.) this unknown because something (.) or do you just sit back and accept it.
J: It, it, feels like you’ve got that kind of struggle (.) struggly place with it really quickly
M: Well I sat and thought about, it I mean there are unknowns (.) unknowns in quite a lot of aspects. This morning, I must admit my um my son told me one of his friends had died a brand new friend and I was thinking well that’s a real unknown isn’t it,= that’s a big unknown um (.) in in life not only in our therapy um death (1.) Its one of those things I know as a child I would think well and um slightly more in twenties and thirties well if I could go through it and know what it was like to go through it it wouldn’t be as scary because it wouldn’t be unknown (.) so that’s the real struggle to a point where you might struggle but at certain stages of your life (.) but then almost come to an acceptance so why (.) why (.) just accept it why go on with it (.) that unknown (.) is this a struggle that you’ve identified?
J: Mm (.) I ‘m not even sure how to put words around it myself um (1.) I mean I think you started to put words around it from a theoretical point of view didn’t you when you talked about conscious and unconscious and then =
M: =Mm and philosophical when I was trying to get hold of an unknown but (.) it is very difficult to (.) its all in my head at the moment but I feel I want to ground it almost what is it that’s unknown mm (.)
J: Well you said that perhaps the one really big unknown was I don’t know if you were quite saying that, but it seems like it is death so there’s that around and we can never know that

M: We can know what its like to observe death but we can’t subject be subjective about it I suppose in a way there are some people who may have had that near death experience so they would have had a feeling and then write about it but no longer is it unknown then is it? Its crossing that I’m doing that trying to theorise again or or because its kept as if there’s the known and there’s the unknown. But philosophically if you were to bring things together I’m thinking of a Buddhist concept the I and the thou if you bring them together they merge into one so I was thinking there’s that wonderful Nagarjuna in Buddhist concepts where he says something like if something is black well something is black something is white so there’s the thesis and antithesis and to bring it together there’s the synthesis but if something is neither black nor white then its an anti synthesis almost its, its, it isn’t combined its not it doesn’t exist. So does the unknown exist?

J: Does the antithesis exist?

M: [unknown antithesis exist] (No) when you said it I was thinking oh our language, our English language cause that’s what you said unknown and I was thinking of the German language and other languages that have two words and probably more languages have different words for known or the opposite, unknown um you know they have to know something and to know someone they divide that mm

J: Were you thinking like the French uh difference between savoir and connaitre

M: [And connaitre] (Yes well I don’t know if thats yes its very similar to that

J: Slightly different meaning to that do you know it in the German are you saying?

M: Its um kennen and thissen um

J: Right so one means to know and one means to know someone?

M: One means to know or to know something and to know someone, yes so but our language as far as I know doesn’t take account its unknown

J: Either known or unknown, = What do you think is the difference then I mean you’re more familiar with the German, I don’t know the German, what do you think is the difference between them to know and to know some one?

M: I can’t remember the specific difference but its I think its to know and to know something and to be subjective about it I suppose internal and external, I know this as opposed to yeah I know that person or I know that feeling. You know you see I’m holding (hands moving) you see your tape recording can’t pick this up but to know is almost to hold it inside I know but I know that’s a tree out there its sort of I know because it’s a tree um but how do I know it’s a tree because I’ve learned it’s a tree its been told over and over to me that it’s a tree it could be, I could call it something else but I know something as a more intuitive um (I) yeah how many times do you pick up perhaps feelings in the therapy room that you really know what’s going on or people who know that something has happened but they are not able to quantify it.

J: So is that is that these are two different kinds of known and I suppose what I was thinking of something I came across was the different kinds of knowing knowing that and knowing that is a tree for example and the knowing that comes from your very kind of being.
M: Yes you just do there's another I mean the psychology is declarative and procedural knowledge is knowing in different ways I can't quote it at the moment but you borrow my book on it is that knowing from the very being of yourself a more intuitive (1) so where does that come from? the collective unconscious? is it something that's passed down?

M: Yes and how does it get passed down? Well if it's the collective unconscious, well then its unconsciously. Unless its developed well it could be a spiritual thing something that is all pervading as opposed to I don't know I'm struggling here for words again.

J: Yes Yes ok well all pervading?

M: as if its part of your being

J: and if its all pervading its then very difficult to then focus it into a word or words.

M: Well it is, it is I was thinking about about evolution and I'm not sure I'm not very good on evolution but if you think about um (.) take a herd of wildebeest and something like that they can they'll know something's happening and they transmit it to each other, transmit it somehow there's a mechanism or a something that transmits it it might be a scent it might be a feeling or something like that that they know if something is happening and the rest of the group are alerted to it whatever that is um probably zoologists might be able to pick that up more or those who work with animals Um who is what's her name um she's a psychologist she's also a um she has autism Oh her name it'll come back to me she's American I can give it to you she has this intuition that you might look at autism and picking up those unknown bits but somehow there is a way of transmitting it.

J: As you were speaking I was thinking of a shoal of tiny fish

M: [Temple Grandian]

J: That's her name, it'll be there on the tape

M: I can give you her reference

J: Ah brilliant I was thinking of a shoal of tiny fish and how they move as one there's no visible sign of how they communicate that I think that's what you're saying that? or maybe it is body language I don't know.

M: I'm wondering whether its something we've developed out of ourselves but its still there if that makes sense I know its contradictory, but thing we don't necessarily, almost a sixth sense, that we don't use but its there and its available at times those times when you feel there's something very odd about this and there's something is strange about this person and you are picking up but there's nothing concrete you can put to it.

J: So are you the way you're speaking it sounds like you've had that kind of experience?

M: Oh yes well I use that quite a lot in my counselling I mean you pick up on something if people are being well you probably think they're lying about something so what do you do? Um or some one I did have an experience once where uh when I was in France it was let me see must have been it might have been twenty years ago there were two women in Aldershot murdered taking their dogs for a walk and because we lived that side of the police did a trawl and came to ask people whether they had seen anything or had any suspicions. Now we had just moved into a new house and the person working for us doing various odd jobs getting things like building wardrobes was quite a twitchy person he was he came in military combats that was his way of working and the police came and there was something about the way that he um he had told me that he was very worried that the police had also interviewed him there was just something that I
he was in the house and suddenly that made me feel rather uncomfortable I don’t
know why (.) now well either I was picking up his anxiety (.) because he was worried
about it or there was something about him that I actually (.) because of that feeling (.)
I went back to the police and said I just feel this is rather strange and you are looking
for some one who wears military combat stuff (.) and I told the police and they came
and interviewed me again and I said I really can’t tell you why I am telling you this (.)
I can keep it out of my mind but I am picking up on something. It could be the chap’s
own anxiety about it or what (.) but I’m telling you as a matter of course but there was
something about it (.) so that was something that was (2.) well it wasn’t unknown
there was a feeling there for me.

J: But you couldn’t put (.) you couldn’t (.) it was difficult to put words to you can’t
you couldn’t say what it was.

M: No

J: So you seem to be saying then that you’ve come across that kind of experience (.)
in your life and in your practice?

M: yes, yes

J: so (.) so but I think you were also saying that it was somehow (.) we’ve unlearned
that (.) we’ve unlearned somehow not (.) = we’ve unlearned how to utilise that?

M: I’m not sure we unlearned it

J: Right

M: Because that would assume you’ve had it in the no I believe that its there (.) I
don’t think that its been (.) been used

J: Right

M: Because to unlearn something would mean a choice , = wouldn’t it (.) in a way (.)
or would it? (2.) Um we’ve got an appendix , = but we don’t use it

J: No no

M: So how is that (.) it w we’ve unlearned it would a sort of mean a conscious
effort of that doing it (.) its not used so its (2.) its not being used (.) I’m struggling
with this.

J: Yes yes

M: Cause the appendix is concrete and you can see that at some stage in the body the
the (.) an appendix was used for something (.) it no longer is so when it flares up it
can be taken away without any harm to the body at all (.) I believe that, that
something is still there (.) developed from the animal kingdom for whatever reason
and we are not needing to use it any more (.) that might be because of the
development of language (.) in because in a way the shoal of fish and the wildebeest
is a communication (.) however its done and I don’t know (.) and it may be done in
different ways.

J: But I guess that what you’re also saying is that you’ve realised that you can do that
(.) whatever it is we are talking about

M: oh yes and I use it

J: So how do you learn how have you learned about it? how have you come to
recognise it do you see? how have you acquired it 9.) I don’t know what the right
word is for that.

M: Um (3.) I suppose its part of one’s training (.) = but I’m wondering if it is (6) just
let me get in touch with it (.) how have I done it (12.) I I uh it will be part of the fact
that I’m in this particular profession (3.) but that’s not to say that other people do it
because psychics will use the same sort of (.) I guess (.) way of working (1.) its
probably something that I’ve had and had in embryonic form is there and perhaps we
all have in embryonic form (1.) but and having gone into counselling and have
developed it more (. ) and I’m much more confident with mine I mean I (. ) if someone has borderline tendencies I tend to pick that up quite quickly uh (. ) I believe but I couldn’t say with a DSM V1 uh sheet and say that this person’s borderline (. ) there’s something about that person that I pick up and then work in a way that I feel will (. ) might be appropriate for that and not to attach too quickly to (. ) to but that might be wrong as well but (. ) I work bet I work a lot with peoples’ feelings (. ) I talk to people I say I’m not picking up that I’m picking up this (1.) and its all coming from here J Is that (. ) that difference between knowing (. ) the two kinds of knowing again is it? the knowing that’s external and evidence and obvious like the DSMVI (. ) the criteria and the just knowing?

M: Yes
J: That’s how it sounded
M: It is a very much (. ) its something in here and its from this level (. ) from the (. ) solar plexus or the stomach or the heart or gut
J: yes yes
M: the gut feeling
J: Yes (. ) but I guess you’ve said that you think that you’ve developed it more through counselling (. ) maybe your training maybe not (. ) can you say any more about that can you have a go at that?
M: I’m more confident at its over the years (. ) I think um I’m more (4.) ready to use it (. ) I don’t think I would necessarily well I would I suppose I was going to say that I wouldn’t go out to tesco and pick up but I do pick up (. ) you know that someone’s angry or I’ll pick up the feeling quite quickly and do with that in a way that feels appropriate (. ) for instance in counselling I would have it much more contained whereas out in the street (. ) or something I would have it contained (. ) I would have it contained or I would be monitoring it as to how to (. ) how to move on that (4.) you you’re (laughs) yes yeh.
J: I guess though that what seems difficult what seems to be difficult is to somehow get at (. ) well how do we get how do we come to be able to tap into it more (. ) what is it that happens to us (2.) I mean one way of saying is how do we learn it but I mean learning in its very broadest sense.

M: I’m not sure we (. ) I’m not sure (. ) I think its there because my daughter has it now but she has modelled (. ) she can see me doing it to her you know I’m not I don’t counsellor her (. ) but I’ll say hey (. ) she’s very quick on picking it up and she comes back to me in that way (. ) now mum (. ) um ohh she’s very (. ) I know you’re feeling like this this and this and I’m thinking but you’re (. ) the way you acted then was feeling like this, this or this and I’m thinking (1.) I say wow , = how did you get that?
J: And you thinks she’s right?
M: Yes, yeh (4.) but that could be because I’m open with her and do similarly, we perhaps we use that form of communication (. ) Yes she’s very quick [yeh] she’s very intuitive

J: [yeh]
J: So you’re saying (. ) I mean you might not be saying (. ) this is just my sense of it that maybe part of why she can do that is because she’s been in contact and proximity with you (2.) doing it?
M: And exposed to it
J: She’s been exposed to it
M: Yes
J: Y’see that could be a way of understanding learning in quite a different way (2.) to be exposed to something. (4.)

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M: Well modelling it or no not even saying modelling modelling is a behaviour isn’t it and it (. ) well normally its an external (.)

J: Role modelling you mean

M: And watching somewhere observations so that’s an external (. ) um patterning you know the, the ?? doll and the (. ) the all the theories of modelling mm are external behaviour because you can then change that behaviour (. ) its very much a behaviourist model whereas this is (. ) not (2.) it is but its almost by vicarious learning its it that’s not even learning um

J: That’s not quite there

M: No, its some sort of, sort of (1.) learning (. ) well uh ah you think about um the symbiotic relationship think about Mahler’s psychological birth of the human infant where the mother and the (. ) the mother the primary care giver to be politically correct (. ) invariably the mother and the baby are are doing this dance between the mother picking up the (. ) what the child needs what the baby needs and the baby helping the mother to learn what it needs (. ) so there is a symbiotic relationship 9. ) there’s a dance there (. ) in fact almost the mother’s learning what (. ) the baby needs (5. ) but she’ll (1. ) perhaps in (2. ) me vocalising it she’s picked it up and she’s then able to communicate it back to me (. ) but what (. ) but I’m saying its already there its always been there 9. ) and its developing what’s always been there (. ) Alzebell that’s the developmental book of education isn’t it (. ) isn’t he saying that in his education educational model that you you pick up what’s there and you move with it so its (4. ) I want to theorise again (10. ) its almost it would almost (. ) be a priori it would almost be there something that’s already there that’s picked up and developed and then (1. ) moved on with (3. ) I’m moving away from your subject I think aren’t I?

J: Uh (. ) no I think this is (. ) no I don’t think so (2. ) no I don’t think you are it was just (. ) I don’t know why but I don’t think you are actually moving away

M: I (. ) I think its there and it can be developed

J: Yes (3. ) so I was just thinking about your sense of moving away from the subject and I don’t think you are but maybe it would be worth just checking (. ) so how might this be related to the unknown? (3. ) My sense is that it isn’t um that it is still to do with

M: I’m suggesting aren’t I that there is no unknown (.),but there is unknown because you don’t know it (. ) perhaps its your term unknown perhaps it should be not known (. ) yet

J: Okay, okay?

M: And don’t know that you know it (4.)

J: Yeh, yeh, (4.) And that would be this intuitive (. ) lets call it an intuitive something (. ) I don’t its probably not the right word but your sense is that we (. ) we sort have it and in a certain kind of relationship and you said a symbiotic relationship where for example the mother (. ) the parent or whatever was willing to learn as well

M: Oh Yes yes they each need to learn in order for the baby to survive and teach the mother how what it needs

J: Yeh the mother needs to be willing to learn in order for the baby to survive and also to begin to learn too

M: Yes

J: It seemed that what you were saying um but but what they’re learning about is pretty much unknown to both of them 9.) In some way I don’t know that’s just come to me

M: Um I’m putting it into a therapy context now because in a way that could be is a symbiotic relationship certainly in the beginning 9.) because part of the th therapist
my perception of the therapist role is to (. ) get in touch with the client not the client’s role to get in touch with the therapist its it’s the other way around to (. ) get in touch with the client as to the way that that person likes to work um (. ) for instance lots uh u u some people like to work bottom up or top down or a mixture of both or have certain ways of of processing (. ) uh some people don’t want to reveal they’re feelings (. ) can’t reveal their feelings they’ve never been taught how to do that so the therapist’s job is very much like the mother of the baby of trying to find out on the journey what it is they’re trying to say what it is they’re trying to communicate in and use the best way for them (. ) um in the way that they can communicate that (1.) so (. ) in a way in in doing that they (. ) are um (1.) taking on board the needs of the client or the baby in uh Mahler’s terms and then (2.) enabling (1.) that person to (. ) say what they’re (. ) to verbalise that because it’s a talking therapy after all (. ) but often and then they’re not saying they can’t say wh what so the therapist is picking that up (. ) hey I hear you saying this but that’s not what I’m picking up (. ) I’m picking up something different (1.) I’m picking up I use I say I have a strong feeling of I’ve got a real feeling here in my throat at the moment is that where you’re feeling is (. ) yes they say or no its not its up to my mouth now (. ) and sometimes they’re quite (. ) they look at me and think how does she know that I’ve got that feeling there? Its monitoring that feeling that at the same time as talking and perhaps identifying any incongruence (. ) you know the child that says no leave me alone I’m alright (. ) and all you feel like you need is is a cuddle (3.) and then you’re you’re looking at then how do how does that person (3.) well I mean a therapeutic relationship can be a reparative relationship where its not necessarily been there in the beginning (. ) and it can be reparative and it can be internalised as a reparative (. ) uh relationship then it can be developed by the individual so I suppose that could be the learning process

J: A form of a reparative process

M: Yes

J: Yeh (4.) so can you turn that round a bit and (. ) and sort of if its possible say anything about well how have you learned to be able to do that? I know its not something you do literally (2.) its not not like a set of skills by the sound of it but but it its kind of how do you how have you come to be able to do that (1.) or to experience it or whatever I don’t know what the right words are really

M: How?

J: Mm

M: How Why? (. ) Um probably my mother was very good at it (2.)

J: Right

M: And she’ll pick (. ) you mean how have I developed it

J: Whichever which ever you

M: I think my mother was always very ( ) (20.) I think she (. ) I means he had a wonderful gift for um communicating as well and would speak to people and pick up things as well (. ) she didn’t use it I mean she wasn’t a therapist but she would pick up on that (1.) on people and how they were feeling so (4.) but how I’ve why I’ve developed it I don’t know (2.) I see it as a very positive aspect some people might close down to it of course (. ) because its quite scary (4.)

J: Uh th cause there were two things there one is that you saying you go it from your mother but you’ve also developed it (1.) so that sounds like two different lots of experience (. ) one is that somehow you’ve noticed it by being around your mother but another is that you’ve developed it on since since then I don’t know of that’s what you mean?
M: But I'm this is very um (2.) reflective I mean an its its (1.) necessarily so if you'd said to me (.) no you wouldn't because I'd still be reflecting upon it (2.) I think it (.) the experience I had with my mother I mean even to the point of her in death (1.) she gave me a tremendous talking about when she was dying um her own death (.) and that was an amazing experience for dealing with and being with people (.) who have died as well because it wasn't as scary really (.) I spose in many ways that was the turning point of me facing that bit of unknown (.) because she allowed me up to a certain point to be part of that (1.) not the total unknown but that part of it and that was a very calming um experience (.) she’d talk about it and it was a very (. ) valuable experience but I'm wondering whether she's done that all over the years that (.) in some way and I've picked it up but I wouldn't necessarily be on a daily basis saying oh I'm now picking up this (.) its something that I'm thinking back about (.) but in my profession I've used it and many ways I think I was (.) I used it a lot more in the beginning in a way that that was um (3.) unbounded it it was spontaneous I probably left a lost it a little bit in the middle part of it when you start to put theory to um things that you do (.) I now integrate the them both I can work with both and I might have theory going through my head or I might not have anything going through my head half the time but (. ) I might have uh oh this'll be a good object relations and or and work with that an automatic level but and this also at an automatic level and whatever this is for the sake of the tape recorder is the bit that is not able to be identified by in words um I will use whichever is in the forefront at the time (2)

J: Mm right

M: I'm not sure that there are only two activities going on but (2.) because there's watching and (2.) whatever the sixth sense is hearing

J: Mm mm it sounds like its something other its its other than what you can put words to

Its other than that its elsewhere its otherwise its (3.) um

M: Well it is elsewhere and otherwise and almost (2.) up there spiritual 9.) but its very much embedded in here

J: As well mm (6.) Its interesting isn't it the difference between that its quite interesting (6.)

M: I'm sure there must (mm) because I must I want a theory for it

J: Mm (3.) I suppose what I came back to just then was (.) well what am I experiencing as we're speaking and what I was experiencing then was here and there as we've been speaking we come to those moments (3.) where we've not finished (3.) but we can't say anymore that's that's what I've experienced talking with you

M: mm

J: Sort of a few times we've come to a place where we are not finished but we can't say any more (.) that's how I've experienced what I've experienced just then

M: But I'm experiencing quite a buzz inside 9.) as if my mind is open to what is this I'm searching for (1.) but (3.) its almost as if it must't be finished because its dynamic (1.) and if its finished if its closed upon its no longer open or able to be worked with

J: Its killed (mm) it kills it it dies

M: Yes (3.) and in a way I can close it down now when you go I will close it's a bit like closing the chakras down you know when you do yoga you close all the chakras down (.) and the solar plexus which is the energy source that your picking up from you particularly close that down and you do because you can be very vulnerable if its open (2.) you think about in therapy you as the therapist (.) and your client you hope will open up and when you say opening up you’re opening up with your whole being with your whole body receiving (1.) um whatever is going through and a lot of
things can go through you (1.) stay in you at times or be blocked at times be able to be moved but (.) if you close on them uh it uh necessarily you have got to close them down at some stage just because you can’t always be open (1.) I’d question that Uh (2.) but if you if you close them down entirely you can’t use them (1.) it becomes redundant like the appendix (.) that very skill becomes redundant skill that way of being whatever you want to (.) I notice the words are very much more person centred and (laughs) I’m trying to put psychodynamic and object relations theory onto it (laughing)

J: You’ve done a bit of everything I think (laughing)
M: Behavioural educational (laughing)
J: Yes Its almost like its all of that but none of it
M: (Laughs) yes
J: That’s my experience just then its kind of all related but its actually none of it really as well
M: The thing that when I said that I don’t know whether you can stay like that all the time I’m just wondering having lived in Thailand the monks (.) the Buddhist monks do tend to stay like that all the time (.) they are open to receiving everything and I’m just wondering whether that is (.) where we have (2.) we (.) human beings but then monks are human beings as well perhaps that’s where they’ve developed and maintained their more openness to what’s coming and picking up on all signs good and bad (.) whereas we’ve perhaps in everyday life perhaps closed down on quite a lot of those (2.) because they might be vulnerable (5.)
J: I mean might that be the difference between the East and the West (2.) or maybe that’s too simplistic?
M: Well it might but there was a programme on television about Worth Abbey um about (1.) think its five or six men who have gone into a retreat , = have you seen that?
J: No I’ve heard about it on the radio
M: Its very good but the monks who were there were very (3.) they were very open (2.) now you could say that their environment is protected (1.) I me they are in a confines of an abbey in a way they’re in a a routine every day they know what they’re going to do and their routine (.)I think paradoxically is very freeing (.) because they know they the routine in a way becomes the back drop it becomes the don’t have to attend to (.) so they can be contemplative they can be open to (1.) um they can have this wonderful being about them (.) they don’t have to be necessarily rattled by the everyday life that some in Lloyds bank might do (.) that that um so perhaps we’re closing and opening all the time (.) in a way that becomes that inhibits what (3.)
J: Yes I suppose what what it sounded like was that in a sense these monks have closed down other aspects of living I mean they still eat and sleep and things but its all set out for them
M: Yes
J: And so they don’t have to think about that they’ve closed down having to think about the (1.) practicalities of life the contingencies of life (2.) and that has allowed them to open up elsewhere (.) that that’s how it sounded
M: Its maybe
J: Whereas when you’ve got to worry about ringing the bank you’ve go a delivery coming and its very difficult to let you mind open to these other things (3.)
M: To be more contemplative
J: Yeh, yeh, you know that just made me think about the what we might kind of call the boundaries in therapy that we have these things often set out we meet on a regular time each week well on the whole we do that and we kind of have these things that are
quite stable (1.) um (3.) and maybe this is to allow this more contemplative state
between therapist and the client
M: [this is to allow this to open up (.)
perhaps because we then shut down I was I was my son was this person who died on
Saturday died from an aneurism now I had a very close friend I worked with her (.)
when I was in the air force and then we developed and not developed our relationship
over the years and then (.) I heard from another (2.) a close friend that she was in
hospital having had a brain tumour so I went to visit her in ((place)) and uh she was
almost uh not comatose but she was not able to speak um (.) but she could hear and (.)
smile occasionally um I I left and on the Saturday I was counselling and in the middle
of my sessions I tend to (.) not in the sessions in the middle of my day around lunch
time or the time I have a break I would phone home cause I have my answer phone on
remote so I can pick it up remotely to see if there any messages if clients have
cancelled so I know about the scheduling (.) and I picked up a message to say from
one of my friends that she had died (1.) and it was an immediate shock (1.) and then I
went into a counselling session and I was able to close it down completely and stay
with the client it didn’t intrude at all because I needed to keep open whatever I closed
down in that and it was still a feeling I closed down I was able to just stay with the
client (2.) so there must be mechanisms for doing that (4.) and then afterwards when I
had I contained the whole afternoon’s counselling and then afterwards I was going to
I gave myself that space to (2.) pick up on my own feelings (8.)
J: Yes I don’t understand how we do that either (3.) but we do
M: I’m not not only therapists I mean doctors must do that they must have domestic
issues or and they go in to do a major heart operation they have got to close down (.)
they’ve got to close down part of them
J: Mm You have to close down something in order to open up something up else
M: Yes I that sounded (2.) but in a way then you’re suggesting that we’ve got from
that interaction that we do have the mechanism for closing down those by choice
almost (.)
J: Mm well that’s just how it sounded (5.)
M: Going back to your research then you have the mechanisms for closing down or
not (6.) or opening up at a later stage
J: Yes (2.) and opening up to what and closing down what? (7.) I mean are we talking
about the unknown how we might close off something known in order to be open to
something unknown (.) is that what we’re saying?
M: I don’t know I mean (3.) I’m just processing (.) all of a sudden I’ve got a block (1.)
why (8.) how do you close down to one (3.) do you have to close down to something
known in order to be open to the unknown (1.) and is it an on off switch (3.) I said
that I might have a model in mind as I’m doing therapy as a guide but then I then
bring to the forefront (.) is that what I do (2.) is it at different levels are they the
Gestalt back and forth foreground and background are they or (2.) is it all working
J: And I was wondering I don’t know if this is ok but I was also wondering what
blocked you then and I was just intrigued by that (1.) something sort of blocked your
thought and I wondered whether it was my question or or my
M: I think it was that that Uhh (7.) because the feelings went and I went very much
into the head
J: Right right
M: And your question was about switching it on
J: As though we had a switch in our heads that we can switch off (both laughing)
M: And it switched of the feeling Yes

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J: No no I recognise that and I found myself suddenly noticing the colour of the carpet (. ) it was almost like I got into a kind of factual (1.) thing something hap (. ) I had a I experienced something too
M: And now the sort of feeling has gone (1.) perhaps it was getting into the unknown and we were afraid of it
J: Yes yes
M: To see what that was (. ) or that it is so unknown that it isn’t unknown because its there but unknown because you can’t put a word to it (6.) I think (7) well do we close down you see I’m thinking about a stephen hawkins last night and the universe (4.) do we close down because its outside our comprehension (5.) its outside our (1.) domain (2.) outside human understanding (4.) and therefore its just too (6.) too (5.) difficult to give it some sort of structure some sort of image some sort of tangibleness (9.)
J: Um this might be going off on yet another tangent but a little while back what’s come back to my mind is that you said you know something about this can be really scary (6.)
M: The unknown
J: I’m not quite sure what you meant actually but its just come back to me I don’t know whether you meant the unknown or it was when you get to one of these points where you suddenly (3.) can’t go any further I’m not quite sure (. ) for some reason this could be scary I don’t mean this here now although that might be so as well no you seem to be saying something about this experience of um not knowing or unknowing or whatever it is (. ) it could be scary
M: It could be I spose it could be scary if you can’t put something concrete on it you can’t put it into your own frame of reference (2.) must now I’m going back I know I am going back to either something is really out there like the universe (1.) here we are on our planet and we know that there are certain planets but on this programme last night it suggested that there were like for instance black holes (1.) the that is totally unknown well it is and it isn’t (. ) because mathematically they can put it down in figures so on a blackboard or a whiteboard with black or a blackboard with white they can actually show you that this is a black hole (. ) great but you know (. ) but that’s not a (. ) unless you’ve been sitting on a star when it collapses and it falls into a black hole and you fall through the other side to what (. ) its unknown that’s scary (. ) because your mind can’t go (4.) go (. ) in (2.) on itself collapsing on itself sufficiently to know why call it black for instance (3.) how do they know its (. ) black (1.) um and the other thing was going from up there to the minutiae of an atom (. ) = what does it look like? We know there are atoms but what does it look like (. ) on the unknown on stephen hawkins he he (. ) he developed the big bang theme by reversing this and the singularity effect I understand (. ) and putting it an and reversing time (. ) and time to us is something that we know we’ve got clocks (. ) and twenty four hours and three hundred and sixty five days a year except every fourth (. ) these are things that are known (. ) Ides of March they’re all calculated January February time (1.) um (1.) but he developed his theory of the big bang the reverse almost of black holes of of the start of the universe (.) um and he could then (2.) he knows that but he doesn’t know that because he hasn’t experienced it (2.) one of his colleagues (. ) or one of his the professors there said um well in which case there should be some excess radiation around well where is it? and then two people (. ) I don’t remember who they were were getting the Nobel prize for taping this (. ) radiation (2.) so there’s something concrete to prove that that’s what it is (. ) its because there’s no concreteness I think (6.)
J: Yes (.) but I (.) and I was thinking then that and because of that you don’t really (.)
he doesn’t really know doesn’t really know what he knows in a strange way
M: Yes (4.) it was one of those eureka moments he doesn’t well he knows
theoretically because he can put it down in (.) whatever all those funny lines all those
funny things they use to put it down (.) he knows that a (.) if it goes one way it can
possibly go the other way and he knows that (.) he has evidence to suggest that his
toory is right because some one else in another form of research has got has actually
taped (.) this excess radiation from the big bang (.) but he’ll never know (1.) whether
there was a big bang well he wasn’t there (6.) or was he? Is it if its in his collective
unconscious (12.)
J: Yes I’m suddenly aware of the whole issue of knowing (1.) unknowing not
knowing whatever (.) always um kind of does collapse all on itself altogether (.) it
gets (.) it just suddenly gets um (2.) I don’t know how to say it (2.) my only sense is
that it all collapses on itself well like a black hole
M: But if you reverse it gets exciting (.) you think about children who don’t
necessarily know because they haven’t had the experience and yet their excitement
and the wonderment (1.) of things (2.) and they’re taking it all in and they’re (.) and
they don’t know that they’re absorbing it all (2.) this unknown because until its
known to them its unknown (3.) and an its in its purest form (.) until they know what
its like to stand in the waves of the sea they’ve never been there (.) think about um oh
(3.) another programme on television (2.) or think about people who live in the tropics
never see snow (.) so until they stand in the snow and know what it is that’s the
knowing bit (.) they might see in a book (.) or they might see on some programme uh
this is snow and its white but until they stand in that snow and feel what its like the
coldness of it (1) they never know it (.) they know it from another experience
J: They know it (.) I don’t know if this is really right but knowing it from books is is
(.) knowing that’s external
M: Yes
J: Whereas standing in the snow (.) its silly really because the snow is still external to
you (.) but standing the snow is is your own experience
M: Because you’re feeling the coldness you’re feeling the (.) you’re using your senses
J: Yes
M: Although you’re using your sense looking at a picture (2.) um (1.) you’re probably
not using all of your sense (6.) I think the unknown is in the sixth sense whatever that
sixth sense is in which case its not unknown (10.)
J: So its almost like you’re saying is anything unknown? (10.)
M: Probably not in the way that we’re looking at it because we’re looking at it from
these (.) sort of either ends of the spectrum by putting un to known you’re making it
the antithesis (mm) I’m trying to put on that Nagarojunus concept (.) of (.) if its
known (.) and its unknown then what’s the synthesis of it (2.) would be (6.) its black
its white it could be (2.) then the synthesis would be its known unknown or (.)
unknown known or and what’s the anti synthesis of it would be or it doesn’t exist. So which answer do you want?
J: I don’t know
M: The unknown doesn’t exist (.) because if you’re searching for it its just not known in its form until you’ve found it
J: But something that doesn’t exist can’t exist
M: Not in our time and space (.) but Stephen Hawkins might say its in a black hole somewhere
APPENDIX THREE – Data analysis, stages three and four

Dave

Discriminated Meaning Units

1) Although D thought the unknown could mean a lot of different things his first thought is that a lot of what he discovered about conducting therapy was that um it partly depended on his capacity to tolerate not knowing.

2) D says that you hope in the early stages of things that training is going to equip him with something that he knew which he could then apply in a way which would have maybe semi predictable outcomes and what he found was that is very partially true but there are great big holes and areas in which it isn’t true.

3) D said that he would take the view that life is a mystery in any case and if he can’t really answer questions like what am I or what I’m doing here or what here is or anything at all then it’s not surprising that an enterprise like therapy which its material is profound should share that in common.

4) For D because it is the stuff of life that we are investigating to imagine that one could at any point know it, is an illusion maybe some sort of comfort that you might hang on to for a bit.

5) D sees becoming able to tolerate not knowing as part of what personal development is and part of what professional development is and also part of what therapy is for the client too although clients often come in to therapy with the hope that they are going to know something.

6) D thinks there are different ways of knowing things, there’s the kind of academic finding out about something through studying it but there’s also the kind of knowing that comes about as a result of immersing oneself in situations and doing things and they become kind of embodied and there are things like wisdom and intuition which you would have to probably provide some sort of definition for and with the second kind of learning which is learning how to do something by immersing yourself in it the knowing is situational so that what I might know about um arises within the um parameters of a particular kind of situation.

Salient features and meanings related to the phenomenon – learning about the unknown

1D) His first thought was that he discovered that therapy partly depended on his capacity to tolerate not knowing.

2D) In the early stages of training he hoped that it would equip him with knowing which he could then apply so that he could predict the outcome. This is only partially true as there are great big holes where it isn’t.

3 D) Therapy is like life which is a mystery where we cannot really answer profound questions like: what am I, What am I doing here, or what is here.

4D) Therapy involves investigating the stuff of life and to imagine that one could know it is an illusion which is a comfort that we might hang on to for a bit.

5 D) Tolerating not knowing is part of personal and professional development which parallels what therapy is about for clients although they may come to therapy hoping they are going to know something.

6D) There are different ways of knowing things: academic finding out about through studying where you learn to define and also knowing that comes from immersing oneself in situations where the doing becomes embodied and where there are things like wisdom and intuition. This kind of knowing arises within the parameters of a particular situation.
7) D speaks of different levels of knowing something as an absolute which is in all situations is quite a rare but learning about or knowing how to operate even certain kinds of conditions is probably more common. He can kind of know that but not necessarily know where it was going to lead or quite how he is going to negotiate the next bit. He just knows enough to manage this bit.

8) When asked by clients if he knows their problem or what he is going to do he draws on the idea of a swamp where he is the swamp guide but neither of us have ever been in this particular swamp before. He couldn’t say that he knows the way out however there are some things that he knows as a result of his experience of being in a lot swamps. The kind of terrain and I have a sense of where it is probably better to put your foot and where not. Having taken one step he would probably have an idea where the next step might be from that point but couldn’t from here now tell you each step to take on our way out of this swamp.

9) This analogy is a way of saying what he’s talking about and a lot of what we/he thinks we do know are quite hard to grasp and they are in the language of the interaction but what we know is something about how to manage the moment of the interaction.

10) D explains different kinds of knowing and the swamp analogy is the knowing that comes from experience and reflecting on experience so that you learn something. This is not like theories which are maps which detail the territory but they are not the territory and so are approximate and cannot be applied at each moment.

11) He then moves to the way therapists will talk about the use of intuition and the different ideas about what intuition is. Is it something that you know, you possess or does it come from outside oneself. He thinks about intuition as something that arises into consciousness out of a store of knowledge and experience that you don’t necessarily know you’ve got until the situation triggers it but you’ve only got it as a result of past exposure to either the same kind of thing or something that resembles it sufficiently to be relevant to it you know we do that all the time we don’t hold consciously

7 D) There are also different levels of knowing. Knowing as an absolute in all situations is rare but learning about or knowing how to operate in certain kinds of conditions is probably more common. We can know something in a situation but not where it is going or how to negotiate it. What we know is just enough to manage this bit.

8 D) He sees the therapist as a swamp guide who has been in swamps but not this particular swamp. As a result of experience he knows something of the terrain and the next step from where he is but not the way out.

9D) What we do know is hard to grasp and is in the language of the interaction but what we do know is something about how to manage the moment of the interaction.

10D) The swamp analogy illustrates the knowing that comes from experience and reflecting on experience so that you learn something. This is not like theories which are maps which detail the territory but they are not the territory and so are approximate and cannot be applied at each moment.

11D) There are different ideas about intuition. Is it something you know or possess or does it come from outside yourself. It is not held in consciousness and is something that arises into consciousness out of a store of knowledge and experience that you don’t necessarily know you’ve got until the situation triggers it. You’ve only got it as a result of relevant experience and you may ask: ‘well how did I do that?’
everything that we know the vast majority of it is at any moment is not in consciousness and he think to himself “well how did I know how to do that”

12) This kind of knowing is accumulated from some previous experience or it could be knowledge about it but they’re not the same thing. You could read and read and read about riding a bike and it would take you so far but the only way that you can learn to ride a bike is to ride the bike and once you’ve learned that unlike knowledge you’ve read you can’t unlearn riding a bike unless you get severe brain damage um whereas you could forget everything you have read you can mug up for an exam and one day you can pass it and three weeks later you could forget it. There is the doing it and reflecting on doing it.

13) all the evidence is that people are initially very affected by the training that they have but as time goes by that recedes into the past its experience that’s going on

14) He acknowledges that unless he somehow starts to encompass the unknown into the known he is not sure that he can do anything with it but it is only talking about very partially known. For D there is a sense in which you know vital living or spontaneous living as in the moment means that you are constantly moving into the unknown. It’s the unfolding unknown that you are managing or negotiating to the extent that you turn it all into something that is known where your life just becomes a series of repetitions not something new at all but a rather safe sort of formula that you devise. D goes on to say that he wouldn’t have thought that there is more unknown in therapy than in living everyday actually

15) D goes on to highlight the way we interact with an aspect of the world and then incorporate, accommodate or adapt to it by attributing a meaning structure and there are some unknown things we ignore so what is unknown remains unknown. But what we can do is not assume that our meanings have a solid reality or whatever the world is.

16) D then wonders what others have said and becomes aware of his own terms. He wonders if there are more mundane kind of meanings that could be understood by the word unknown that he is missing. He refers to a talk given by a colleague where he would be interested to

12 D) Intuitive knowing is therefore not the same as knowing about something which can only take you so far. So like riding a bike the only way to learn is to ride the bike and unlike knowledge learned from reading you can’t unlearn it.

13 D) People are very affected by their training but that recedes into the past, it’s the experience that is going on.

14 D) Knowing is only partial and unless he encompasses the unknown into the known he cannot do anything with it. We know that vital or spontaneous living means continuously moving into the unknown and the unfolding unknown is what we have to negotiate and turn into something known. Life can become a series of repetitions, rather then something new, where you turn the unknown into a rather safe formula that you devise. There isn’t more unknown in therapy than in living.

15 D) When we interact with the world we incorporate, accommodate or adapt to it by attributing meaning or some unknown things we ignore so what is unknown remains unknown so what we can do is not assume our meanings have a solid reality.

16 D) In recognising that he is thinking about what others have said he wonders whether he might be missing something. For example a talk given by a colleague about the non intentional might be related to the unknown because you do not plan it.
know what he had to say thinking that the idea of the non intentional kind of relates somewhat to the unknown because you don’t plan it.

17) D speaks of learning about how he learned about things being unknown as a journey as something like hope followed by disillusionment where several times over there was recognition that it was not unreasonable that the explanations were incomplete and partial

18) D says that in fact they were influencing him even though he thought he’d ditched them he couldn’t get rid of them anymore that he could get rid of learning how to ride a bike.

19) So he has set out on trainings hoping to end up knowing and then for a while thinking that he did know but then finding that actually it doesn’t equip him to know enough or as much as he’d like in the real situation and then being disillusioned as a result of that and thinking well that one isn’t right you know so I’ll try this other one and then finding out that that has the same kinds of limitations attached to it.

20) It was only after a while that D realised that all theories have limitations and therefore our claims to knowledge even the history of science or the history of ideas or anything you like, what we think we know at one point turns out not to be true at another. So our claims to knowledge are very questionable and he has reached a tentative point where that the idea we know is a defence against what it actually is like to live in the world. He is not saying that we can do without anything like knowledge its just that I think that we comfort ourselves that it has more solidity than it actually does.

21) On thinking about the different theories D has tried he says they don’t go far enough because the map doesn’t match the territory. Like certain sorts of psychoanalytic interpretation for example clearly crap and so that would be the map so psychoanalytic theory would be the map and actually working with somebody would be the territory, or when his own experience does not match the theory then he will question it in some way and if that keeps happening maybe chuck the map away.

22) D says he reached a point where he realised that if you look at things from one way they look one way and if you look at them from another they look different and the exploration of different theories confirmed

17 D) Learning about the unknown is a journey of hope followed by disillusionment caused by repeated recognition that explanations are incomplete and partial.

18 D) Even theories that you ditch influence you and you cannot get rid of them.

19 D) The hope manifests by doing different trainings and then finding out that each one doesn’t equip you to know in the real situation and as a result you become disillusioned.

20 D) Then after a while you realise that all theories have limitations and therefore claims to knowing, whether historic or science are questionable as a defence against what it is like to live in the world. Its not that we can do without any knowledge but we do comfort ourselves that it has more solidity than it actually does.

21 D) So different psychotherapeutic theories map out what we should do but they are not the same as the territory of practice and we eventually learn when they do not match, question the theory and chuck it away.

22 D) Some of the problems with this are that things look one way from one perspective and different from another, theories do not hold in certain circumstances
there's not an answer. There are certainties which are proclaimed within by certain models of theories which are highly questionable they clearly don't hold in certain circumstances. Humanistic theory for and the idea that human being are naturally constructive and pro social but in one situation it might look very much like that but take some Congolese battlefield or something and it would look anything but.

23) D speaks of various theories he has studied but says he's only telling this because he thinks it came out of his wish to know, he wanted the comfort of knowing but never found and when he thought he had he hadn't so he would set off looking for it again. He had to realise that there wasn't such a thing.

24) D speaks of the way trainings tend to foster the hope that this is a way of knowing and it is only by doing it and matching that the training provides you with the map. He tries to adopt a much more critical stance from the beginning not to deliver it as the truth or anything or a version of the truth but as a partially true way of looking at things which can be useful in many circumstances and that's it.

25) For D training is like a balance between fostering hope and knowledge on the one hand and creating some scepticism about it on the other something like that not completely disillusioning people which is not very kind, but that does come into it. When he started out training was full of certainties, this is what you do this is how you do it and that other lot over there don't know what they're talking about.

26) D thinks training needs to change, certainly in higher education although he doubts whether in single schools of therapy which are teaching within those single schools who think they know, its not that they don't know anything its just their map isn't as complete as they like to think.

27) D is then thinking that there's something in the therapeutic situation being a balance between knowing and not knowing and that there it is probably better the clearer he is that he doesn't know. The more he thinks he does know the more likely he is to make assumptions and not really to test the evidence, not really to listen. For example people might say you are not suitable for psychoanalysis or that you're resisting or it is just a manifestation of your negative transference or something and
although you don’t you make what they think hold true regardless of anything else.

28) D is saying how therapists can think there is something going on but actually there isn’t because their claim to knowledge is preventing anything from going on, the delusion of knowing gets in the way of the living authentic encounter that could be happening.

29) D then describes something called situated action theory which is illustrated by a distinction made between European navigation systems and the form of navigation used by a particular group of south sea islanders and everybody’s navigational system before we had invented modern ways of doing. The European navigator has a course planned and plotted and has to keep checking that they are on this course compared to a system where you know it is you’re heading but you may not know exactly how you are going to get there and you might have to, head off for a particular landmark, particular island and then you might go to another one. Well what you know are the features of the terrain if you like and you’re guided by, you are adjusting to the wind and the currents and although you do have a route it isn’t a straight line and you couldn’t in advance possibly say um precisely how you’re gonna get there because what you do is you are adjusting to the contingencies of the situation at every moment.

30) Some use one approach and some the other and D prefers the south sea island method because therapy is a lot about helping somebody else to become more open to experiencing whereas knowing where you are going and exactly how you’re gonna get isn’t very conducive to learning about or learning to become more open to experiencing. A predetermined framework means you

31) This more existential way means you cannot have it all nailed down, some people love to have it all nailed down its difficult these days because we’re in a climate of nailing everything down. As a teacher that is more and more and more difficult.

32) When D goes into a teaching situation he does not want to deliver the same thing twice although he has colleagues who would hate to go into a lecture without it all being pre planned because it feels too frightening, exposing and vulnerable. He doesn’t like it too pre planned because it deprives it of life as

28 D) Therapists can think there is something going on when actually their claim to knowledge, as the delusion of knowing gets in the way of the living authentic encounter.

29 D) A different way of learning is illustrated by the difference between the way south sea islanders navigate compared to European navigation. This is the difference between having a planned course and checking to make sure you are on it compared to knowing where you are heading and recognising a landmark which leads you to the next one responding to the wind and rain, the contingencies of the situation. So you cannot predict your route precisely.

30 D) The second method is preferential because it helps somebody else to become more open to experiencing whereas knowing how to get where you are going is not conducive to learning either about something or from experience

32 D) This way is more existential but it is difficult as some people want to have it nailed down, that’s the climate we are in.

33 D) As a teacher D does not want to deliver the same thing twice but others do because it is too frightening, exposing and vulnerable. Being too pre planned deprives the learning of life and it can be a bloody shambles although he can take the risk and function well enough to deal with emerging demands.
engaging and interesting but it can also be a bloody shambles although he often enough functioning well enough to deal with the emerging demands of the moment to be able to risk it.

33) For D any pretence that you know is a defence against the terror of authentic living. The unknown is frightening, he is not sure that that's always right, but there is quite a lot of truth in it. And so we try to turn the unknown into the known so that we can predict it and control it and manage it and won't be taken by surprise by it and so on. But I think it's to underestimate our ability to manage the unknown cause I think probably we really we are doing that anyway we just don't like thinking about it.

34) D suggests that really we know, do you know, really we know, we don't know what life is, we don't know what we are, we don't know what is, we don't know

35) D points out how all these claims to knowledge are not real and can look inadequate or ludicrous from a phenomenological perspective, especially historical ones, knowing is never complete.

36) D doesn't think there is anything new in what he is saying, didn't Jung say towards the end of his life say something about the more he got to know the more he realised that he didn't know anything.

33 D) Any pretence that you know is a defence against the terror of authentic living. There is truth in the idea that the unknown is frightening so we try to turn the unknown into the known so that we can predict, control and manage it so that we won't be taken by surprise. We underestimate our ability to manage the unknown cause I think probably we really we are doing that anyway we just don't like thinking about it.

34 D) We really know that we don't know what life is and what we are and what is

35 D) From a phenomenological perspective these claims to knowledge are not real and can look inadequate or ludicrous, knowing is never complete.

36 D) There is nothing new in what he is saying and didn't Jung say towards the end of his life that the more he got to know the more he realised that he didn't know anything.
Sara

*Discriminated Meaning Units*

1) S thinks the unknown has informed her practice quite considerably in that I the experience of making a journey into the unknown and what has come out of the for her is that she thinks its about honesty and that if you’re true to yourself then you can find happiness and which sounds very trite. But it took her a long time to make that journey which came about through training and through therapy which strengthened her belief sufficiently to make that leap.

2) Her own personal journey happened from being in a marriage with someone she now realises was probably borderline personality disorder which actually meant a lot of holding and containing from her, actually a vast amount of those things. There was a huge part of her that wanted to get away from that because she’d been holding and containing that for twenty seven years at an enormous cost. There was repressed material surfacing through dreams of escaping and there was a huge part of her that wanted to be there.

3) It was only when she went to (training organisation) that something began to change. She sees that as an enormous adventure in many ways emotional and intellectually. Therapy was a requirement of the course and at first she went a bit grudgingly and then she embraced it quite wholeheartedly and it gave her the strength to do something about her personal situation which she left.

4) Then eighteen months later she made an enormous leap into the unknown by moving out of the area where she’d spent her teenage married life and actually went to live in the west country where she was quite unhappy in many ways. But she felt she wanted to stay in this rented house long enough to see all the seasons making a decision to come back this way.

5) That was a tremendous leap into the unknown and though it was painful because she wasn’t embraced as she had hoped it was a learning curve that there again strengthened her. So there were layers of strengthening going on um and when I came back things had just gone from strength to

*Salient features and meanings related to the phenomenon – learning about the unknown*

1 S begins by explaining what the unknown means for her in terms of experience of a persona journey from which she discovered the importance of being true to yourself. The journey was long and came about through training and through therapy which strengthened her belief sufficiently to make the leap.

2 S’s story begins from being in a marriage where she now feels her partner had a borderline personality disorder and she wanted to get away from all the holding and containing she did at enormous cost to herself. Repressed material was surfacing in dreams of escaping although part of her wanted to stay too.

3 S When she began to train as a therapist she saw it as a huge adventure and something began to change emotionally and intellectually. Although she felt grudging about starting therapy, which was a course requirement, she embraced it wholeheartedly. It gave her the strength to do something about her personal situation.

4 S After eighteen months she made an enormous leap into the unknown and moved away to the west country. Although she was quite unhappy she needed to see all the seasons through before making a decision to come back to the area where she had lived.

5 S This leap into the unknown was painful because she wasn’t embraced as she had hoped but it was a learning curve which gave her strength.
strength

6) S reflects on her use of the word strength a lot but although things haven't always been easy its like most things in life it sometimes it's a struggle but she feels she has been enormously enriched by that experience and it maybe informed her practice.

7) It is the reality of the difficulty that is over identifying and wanting people to do the same because one has to realise as she has realised that not necessarily everyone does

8) Many of her clients come because they're having relationship problems and often that is a thread running through, should someone leave this relationship or stay so she is always mindful of that and holds that very strongly that she may have done that and survived and come to be enjoying herself so she has to hold in mind that other people might not, we are all different

9) S thinks she is relating the unknown in a very concrete way to what has happened on her journey and wondered if the researcher was thinking about a much wider more abstract way such as being um out there in the universe and is there more than us here on this planet and elsewhere that sense of not knowing

10) This sense of the abstract is something she doesn't think about a lot so she thinks she must be quite a concrete person which is not fantasy but about what has happened, its her reality rather than fantasy

11) S doesn't necessarily think the unknown has a very concrete sense to it but is relating it very much to herself in a concrete sense. Looking at the unknown was an experience that led to a journey into the unknown rather than the unknown as a future

12) S thinks maybe she is looking at it as her past which may be to do with being psychoanalytic and looking back before she can look forward, maybe that’s about looking back in her own history before she can cope with something as big as a question of what now and the vastness of that

13) She thinks that maybe that keeps her safe that's something about being psychoanalytically trained and also loving history really its something about learning from the past a bit so you can then cope with the future

6 S) S wonders about her frequent use of the word strength which has come from the struggle of life which she feels enriched by and which informs her practice.

7 S) Her own struggle means that she can over identify and want clients to do the same as her although she has realised not everyone necessarily does.

8 S) Many of her clients also struggle with whether or not to leave a relationship but she has to hold in mind that although she left, survived and is enjoying life other people are different.

9 S) S queried what she called her concrete way of relating her experience to the unknown wondering if the researcher was thinking more abstractly such as the unknown out there in the universe and the question of are there others out there and her sense not knowing.

10 S) S decides she must be quite a concrete person as she doesn't think about these abstract ideas. She thinks more about the reality of her life rather than fantasy.

11 S) Although she doesn't think the unknown has a concrete sense she is relating it to herself in a concrete sense as an experience of a journey into the unknown rather than the unknown as a future

12 S) S's way is to look back at the past and her own history, which is informed by her psychoanalytic background, before she can look at and cope with the vastness of the future

13 S) It is about her theoretical orientation and also loving history and learning from the past also keeps her safe
14) For S the future is so unknown, so vast that looking back and seeing how you coped with the past experience means that you could you could tolerate the emotion of the unknown really. She thinks that has given her the confidence to contemplate future unknowns S notes that she talking in a very kind of subjective way here

15) S says that what immediately would spring to her mind is she would think of the future, the unknown as being in the future that was her assumption that's what that would conjure up to her but then she begins to think there might be unknowns in the past that we only perhaps make sense of. For her though it would be in the future

16) S thinks it makes it more manageable to look at the unknown as the future because the unknown could be to many people quite frightening, its quite a scary thought the unknown. For example she says that you often hear people say well the past has gone but you don’t know what is going to happen in the future so live in the here and now

17) S thinks its about not knowing and doesn’t know what else to add to that really other than that

18) She thinks the unknown is much less scary and now having made one leap of faith survived and benefited from it the idea of the future is less frightening

19) S thinks perhaps she doesn’t think about it a great deal because she is quite contented living in the here and now and its only since she has done that in the whole of her life. She says she has only truly lived in the present and only been truly content by doing that because before when she was not nearly as happy as now when she was constantly looking ahead and thinking what if and having to map out the whole of life, dot every I and cross every T cause it was unknown and therefore there was an anxiety about making a map somehow

20) S thinks the map was a way of containing and holding anxiety and when she is dealing with clients now who are anxious particularly if their attachments are not strong then there will be lots of trying to provide themselves with a map lots of plans and things to be mapped out so I think what it does is a containing and holding of massive anxiety

14 S) The future as unknown is so vast that seeing how she coped in the past reminds her that she can tolerate the emotion of the unknown and contemplate future unknowns.

15 S) Having said she assumed the unknown as the future S begins to think there may be unknowns in the past but decides that for her it is the future.

16 S) Seeing the unknown as the future makes it more manageable because it could be scary to many people. You don’t know what is going to happen in the future so live in the here and now

17 S) The unknown is about not knowing and S doesn’t know what to add to that

18 S) Having made one leap of faith not knowing about the future is less frightening

19 S) Living in the here and now and not thinking about the future has meant she is contented. When she was unhappy she was always looking ahead and trying to map out her life, dot every I and cross every T because of the anxiety

20 S) A map is a way of containing and holding massive anxiety which she sees now in clients whose attachments are not strong
21) S has had this thought which she has heard other people say it so its not an original thought, that clients find their way to the counsellor they need. She thinks it is extraordinary that she seems to have a lot of clients at transitional stages and an awful lot of this question of whether to make this leap such to leave this person so she is very mindful of not over identifying and has to carry that tension.

22) S wonders what would be a better word than tension or stick with that. The reality really that’s how it is for her, her reality is that she doesn’t know and potentially it may sound like she is not coping with it. She thinks maybe her identification is not a bad thing because maybe it enhances the communication and the tension of it maybe the reality for her S thinks there is often a tension there she hopes there always will be because otherwise? So she doesn’t want that to happen.

23) And that leads her to another unknown and whether we know what will happen to clients when they leave us is an unknown and working with someone very intimately for quite a long period of time and apart from the odd card maybe never knowing.

24) S asks then do we know anything and then wonders if we have to assume we do otherwise we don’t know and a lot of what we think we know we’ve been told we know it anyway. We’re told what is that is black or that is white.

25) She then suggests we’re talking about certainty or not certainty and do we know anything in client work and what is a certainty for one what is known for one person maybe isn’t for another.

26) She then starts thinking about how important the known in the past is because you find you haven’t got a reason for coming. For example perhaps if you haven’t got any sense of your own family history, you were adopted, then there’s that huge search for an identity that somebody came for asking where do I come from who are my cousins I don’t know anything first off. That struggle with not knowing what there is.

27) She finds that not knowing about family history is tragic if it isn’t known

28) S would think there’s much more of a difficulty with someone who didn’t know their history because part of them would be longing to know and part of them not knowing what

21 S) The idea that clients find their way to the counsellor they need resonates with her as she has lots of clients who are at transitional stages especially related to the dilemma of whether to leave some one. She is mindful of not over identifying and has to carry the tension.

22 S) S queries whether tension is the right word but the reality for her is that she doesn’t know and whilst it may sound like she is not coping but her identification may also help communication.

23 S) Another unknown is that having worked very intimately with some one for a long time we do not know what will happen to clients when they leave.

24 S) S then queries whether we know anything and whether we have to assume we know in order to hide that we don’t know. A lot of what we think we know we have been told we know, we are told what is.

25 S) S thinks this is about certainty and uncertainty questioning whether knowing is the same from one person to another.

26 S) If you know the past you do not have a reason for coming to therapy whereas if you haven’t got a sense of family history, such as you were adopted, then there is a search for an identity which provokes questions like where do I come from and a struggle with not knowing.

27 S) Not knowing about family history is tragic.

28 S) S feels that not knowing your history creates a tension between longing to know and not knowing what knowing would result in such as a shattering of fantasies.
knowing would result in because there might be a tremendous shattering of their fantasy about their parents. So I guess there's a tension of not knowing of not knowing what we all know.

29) S says that our memory is very hard to carry anyway and it's one of the things that clients carry ambivalence towards her and maybe the decision when they know which direction they're going in whatever that is and into it it's the ambivalence it can create a sense of hopelessness in them they can't go back, can't escape from it and can't go into the future they're in no-mans-land.

30) S feels she has learned mostly through experience and just being alive. Experiences have happened and you meet people. She asks well does anyone know really how can you know other people? Maybe through supervision and maybe through therapy. She does think having a sense of where you came from and your own personal history helps you to cope with the unknown.

31) S thinks the fact that she believed that anyway before she went to do her training and that has just reinforced that that sense of importance.

32) S has always been fascinated by family history and looking at photographs and won't throw away even very old photographs and would love to have the time to do a family tree. She is always intrigued by people who really aren't particularly interested in doing something like that so she thinks that came first before the psychodynamic training. That was a natural thing for her and having some sense of that for me certainly helps me to cope with the unknown.

33) S thinks that training verified the importance of history.

34) S thinks it is interesting when you talk to someone perhaps who doesn't live as much in the present as she is now. She says that you're talking to someone who is living very much here and now and its interesting for her to be talking to someone who maybe is more concerned about what is gonna happen but there again she says she is still looking about the unknown as being the future.

35) S then considers what if there are unknown things around us now because she doesn't know what the researcher is thinking and the researcher doesn't know what she is thinking.

29 S) Our memory is hard to carry and clients carry the ambivalence towards her when they are caught in the hopelessness of not being able to go back or go into the future, when they are in no-mans-land.

30 S) S feels she has learned mostly through experience and just being alive. She questions whether anyone knows how you can know other people perhaps through therapy and supervision. Having a sense of where you came from and your own personal history is what helps you cope with the unknown. (recurrent theme)

31 S) Training has reinforced this belief.

32 S) She has always had this belief being fascinated by family history and old photographs, before her training. She is intrigued by people who are not interested in that. This helps her cope with the unknown.

33 S) Training verified the importance of history.

34 S) For S it is interesting to talk to someone who doesn't live in the present as she does and who is concerned about what is going to happen. She acknowledges though that she is still looking at the unknown as being in the future.

35 S) S then wonders if there are unknown things here and now between herself and the researcher. Not knowing what the researcher is thinking is the real unknown in this room.
and that's the real unknown in this room at this minute

36) The S acknowledges that she been here almost an hour so maybe its about as much as one can deal with at any one time its so vast, its huge isn't it she asks?
Quite enough (.9)

36 S) Having been here nearly an hour it about as much unknown as she can deal with as it is so vast.
Mel

Discriminated Meaning Units

1) When M has thought about this to begin with and following on from what the researcher just said about the unknown she sort of panicked and thought in her mind that does she know about that tried to think about theory and things and tried to grab onto something

2) But the more she thinks about it the more she thinks it underlines her philosophy about counselling and psychotherapy which is actually not just about working in counselling and psychotherapy it's about her life because she sees the two connecting. She doesn't see the way she is as a counsellor or therapist as different. There are boundaries when you're working but she doesn't feel that fundamentally what she believes is different and the whole thing is part of it and so underlying is her personal philosophy as well as her working one.

3) For M it is a belief that there is something we cannot know and cannot conceptualise and if you speak about it words peter out.

4) She doesn't know how that connects to day to day working but there's always that striving to try and hold the belief that there is this unknown bit. And it is a striving because she is very well aware of the part of her that will want to grab onto what's known or hear something about what a client says and think oh yeah, you know, that's this, this and this.

5) M's general belief system is that it manifests in very tiny little everyday ways and not something which has to be a great big spiritual, once in a life time experience or something like that, of a sort of numinous contact with the unknown or something but just little things all the time in every day life

6) On what these little things are M says she doesn't know if it's a particular thing it's more to do with a state of being. An example is an experience recently where she has been working with a three times a week patient who's quite disturbed has pockets of quite psychotic thinking they had a period where

Salient features and meanings related to the phenomenon – learning about the unknown

1) M recognises that when she begin to think about the unknown she panicked wondering whether she knows and tried to grab at something by thinking of theory

2) But the more she thinks about it the more she thinks it underlines her philosophy of psychotherapy which is that it working in this field and her life are connected. Whilst there are boundaries when working she is not fundamentally different. Her personal philosophy and working one are the same.

3) M has a belief that there is something we cannot know and cannot conceptualise and if you speak about it words peter out.

4) M connects that to the say to day working and striving to hold the belief that there is something unknown and it is a striving because she recognises she will want to grab onto what she knows about what a client says

5) The unknown manifests in tiny little everyday ways rather than a life time spiritual experience such as a numinous contact.

6) The little things are to do with a state of being rather than a particular thing. She describes the struggle of a client to stay in the room and be with her, sometimes literally especially during psychotic or disturbed pockets and when words fail the patient has been feeling quite suicidal and a period where she's been very then words are

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failing M because again its like trying to get hold of something that's very difficult to get hold of. The struggle has been for the patient to actually be in the room with her and it's been a physical struggle to get to therapy and when she's there it's an unbearable experience for her sometimes she talks about feeling stripped bare and being very raw

7) M is saying all this because then something happened to her which she thinks is connected to this sort of not knowing about something. What then began to happen was in her own analysis she had session after session unable to speak although she wanted to speak. But she just drifted off into another sort of limbo sort of dreamy sort of state where she didn't know whether what was going on in her mind was something she had said or whether it was inside me there was no difference between inside and outside and it was a very bizarre experience that went on and on for quite some time. She thought she should have felt it was related to what was going on with her patient couldn't tell you what it was or why it was happening and she didn't want to try and pin it down. She thinks this is like there is something not known about that

8) M hesitates because it sounds mystical but she thinks about things like an unconscious to unconscious communication and a connection between that sort of idea about what Jung calls the collective unconscious. She thinks that there's a way in which we are all connected but that is something that we cannot conceive of. She hesitates not wanting to sound new age really. Its not a sort of simple we're all as one big happy family or something like that or we've all got this big spiritual connection oh isn't that wonderful, its more than that really but she doesn't know.

9) M feels this is a difficult thing to talk about for her it connects to a bit about belief system and about spirituality and so on. When you talk about those sorts of things with people it can get quite difficult and the language is difficult and you can't find the words. People have got different language and different ideas and she thinks its quite exposing actually to talk about it.

10) M is wary about talking about this because she thinks its like she is just wary about trying to pin it down because that would be like saying you know something, about the unknown

7 ME) At the same time something happens to M in her own therapy where she experiences a sort of limbo state where she didn't know what was going on in her mind or what was inside and what outside, there was no difference. She realise this was related to her patient not being able to say what it was or what was happening and didn't want to pin it down.

8 ME) M hesitates because she doesn't want to sound new age, one big happy family, spiritual connection, about the idea of something mystical which might be the idea of unconscious to unconscious communication linked to the idea of the collective unconscious may be a way in which we are all connected

9 ME) It is difficult for M to talk about because it connects to beliefs about spirituality which are difficult to talk about to others who have a different language and ideas the language fails. It is also exposing.

10 ME) She is also wary because pinning it down would be like saying you something about the unknown

11) She thinks there's a point at which thinking and words have to stop. Nothing else
happens. It's sort of something other than words and thought. She wonders whether it's like a sort of respect or acknowledgment that there is an area of each of us and maybe its an area of, our experience of human beings that cannot be touched or reached either by another person or maybe be ourselves.

12) M thinks that maybe its to do with a sort of potential. In the theoretical way she has found herself being increasingly drawn to ideas of Michael Fordham who developed this idea of humans idea of the self as something that's like potential. He was a biologist himself so there was a sort of feeling of him looking at it from a scientific point of view and thinking of the self as this sort of innate potential that we are each born with. Something unique which is like what he would term the self and there are experiences throughout life of what he called de-integration and re-integration and actually there's a sort of process where the self reaches out. A part of it will de-integrate and have experience and then re-integrate with experience so that builds a sort of ego and consciousness. The part that is the self has this life process which remains there and in potential, there's always more in a way but it can't be known but it becomes known through contact with the real world.

13) M thinks there's something that we can't know about which sort of drives us like a life force and she thinks of that as the unknowable part of it but we know bits of it through our experience yet cannot know the whole of it.

14) It's the question of the idea of, God as a known thing and it's like a negative idea of God and what attracts her to that idea but then she is surprised by the idea that gosh no it is a reaction against something and is interesting because when she begins to talk about this she starts to think about her experience of religion.

15) For M that's the other way in which these sort of things have got conceptualised and how they've been presented to her throughout her life and there's something about reacting against the idea of trying to say what God is or what an unknown thing is really.

16) When M started training as a counsellor and began to get hold of the idea of the unconscious which she thinks is a way of conceptualising the unknown she began. She can remember thinking of going to some WPF conferences early on and meeting people who 11 ME) There is a point where thinking and words have to stop, the unknown is something other. This might be her acknowledgment or respect of that area of our experience as human beings that cannot be reached by another or by ourselves.

12 ME) In a theoretical way she sees this as a potential as in work of Michael Fordham's scientific approach to ideas about the self as an innate potential which we are born with but is a potentiality. It is unique and there are experiences where the self reaches out and will de-integrate and have an experience and then reintegrate with the experience which builds an ego and consciousness. It cannot be known except through contact with the world.

13 ME) The unknown is that which drives us like a life force as unknowable but we can know bits through our experience without knowing it.

14 ME) When speaking of the question of the idea of god M suddenly realises it is reaction against something which starts her thinking about her experience of religion.

15 ME) So her reaction is related to another way in which the unknown has been conceptualised and presented to her throughout her life by trying to say what god is.

16 ME) When she began training as a counsellor M began to get hold of the idea of the unconscious as a way of conceptualising the unknown and then at a conference where she met people who were both therapists and
were both therapists and priests and thinking
oh, you can put those two things together can
you, how does that link what goes on there

17) Her first analyst was a psychotherapist and
a priest and that probably had a profound
effect and thinking about that. She has also
noticed recently in her current analysis as well,
a feeling of missing something there and again
she can't tell what it is but there is something
which for want of a better word is a sort of
spiritual element which she thinks was more
present in her first experience

18) M's current concern which is something
that is lived and experienced and it isn't
something you can just say in thinking about
the experience. She thinks with her first
therapist that it was a really profound
experience but can't think of the right word
now because she was going to say, knowledge
or belief and none of those is right. A profound
lived experience of the unknown of really
being able to allow that to be.

19) there was a capacity to live with the
unknown. The idea of the unknown in a
comfortable way isn't enough and isn't the
right word but there is something that was
more than an intellectual knowledge it was a
lived thing um which sort of underpinned

20) M doesn't know if she knew at the time
because this was her first experience of an in
depth therapy. That's very hard to answer
because of all the questions about idealisation
the transference that come into that. She
thinks all of that was there at the time and its
hard to distinguish what was idealisation and
what was knowing. It was something special
she thinks its only in and only recently she has
been able to begin to see that because there
were a lot of feelings around the ending

21) M is not sure if this is connected to the
unknown but in her mind its connecting with
last night with some one who was giving a
seminar on ethics and coming at it from the
point of view of therapy being an ethical
activity the idea of being there for the other
and how it takes you beyond. The seminar
leader was describing that as another like a
third position so its beyond the paranoid
schizoid and the depressive position because
the depressive position there's still the idea
that somehow the guilt, the desire to make
reparation there is still somehow there's a sort
of narcissistic element in that

priests and she realised you could put those
things together and wondered how.

17 ME) Her first psychotherapist who was also
a priest had a profound effect on her thinking
about that and she has noticed recently that this
spiritual element was more present in that
therapy than her current one.

18 ME) Currently M thinks this unknown is
something that is lived and cannot be said in
thinking about experience which is why she
cannot find the right word for that experience.
It was a profound lived experience of the
unknown and being able to allow that to be.

19 ME) This capacity to live with the unknown
is not a comfortable way and more than
intellectual knowledge but a lived thing that
underpins

20 ME) She is not sure whether she knew this
at the time because it was her first experience
of in depth therapy, because issues about
idealisation and transference make it difficult
to distinguish what she knows. It is only
recently that she has begun to see that because
of the feelings around ending that therapy

21 ME) She connects this feeling to a seminar
the previous evening which was about therapy
as an ethical activity and being there for
another takes you beyond, such as the paranoid
schizoid position. Even beyond the depressive
position which is still about the idea of guilt
and reparation which is a narcissistic element
22) The ethical position of being there for the other without wanting anything back and being prepared to take responsibility for that. This is a hypothetical position because nobody ever achieves it. So what she is saying is that what came home to her about that was again the feeling of how important it is that you just live and be these things rather than have an intellectual belief. She thinks that's the connection she is making about the unknown and you could waffle on for hours about the theory and the unconscious and what Freud meant by the unconscious or what Jung meant by it but actually its about a way of being its that way of being.

23) M's feeling about the theory when she is thinking about it these days and she thinks its important is because in a strange sort of way we have to strive to put into words something about our experiences including our experiences of the unknown and we can't exist without coming into existence in relationship to other people.

24) She describes something she read by Donald Meltzer when he's talking about claustrophobia and how he says he is going to describe what he felt this was but unless you'd experienced it would probably sound like a load of rubbish because its all in the counter transference. He wrote a description of being with a particular type of patient and some of that sort of registered with M and as she read she thought Oh yes. Reading other things have done that too like Michael Fordham has written a seminal paper called defences of the self which when she first read it she thought I don't know what this is about” this was a really difficult paper and having worked with this training patient and gone back to it she thinks “oh that's what he's talking about that's that experience” So its that process of people writing about their experiences is terribly important.

25) How we approach the theory is then whether we think about this is the picture of the world or whether we think of it as this is a way of describing an experience and its an experience that can quite often happen and we collect it under these headings.

26) So coming back to your question about training she thinks it depends on how its taught and how the theory is presented so whether its presented as gospel or not. She thinks it is possible in a paradoxical way to begin that process of people thinking about or having experiences that are about the unknown.
through teaching but it's not about teaching facts, it's about experience again and it comes back to that living it and being it. When you teach you have to be, there's a sort of integrity that's required, a belief in what you're teaching.

27) M's experiences of the best teachers is where you get that feeling, and she was thinking in terms of the person giving the seminar last night, there was something quite profound in her belief. She said very little really but there was something about the way she presented that spoke volumes really.

28) M thinks this is interesting because she was thinking about something that came up the other day in connection with Christianity and the effect of a single figure like Christ or Gandhi or maybe people like Freud and Jung they were very remarkable people very very rare people and when you hear people talk about them in the end it comes down to how they were in the world, its about their presence their being and that sort of encapsulates something.

29) M asks how does that connect to the unknown, its to do with how you think about knowledge and how you teach and she thinks that it is because for her talking about the unknown is talking about something spiritual really and that's where sort of God words come into it.

30) For M this is something that develops over time and it's very hard to think how these things have developed to take yourself back and say this is what I was believing at this stage or whatever. The internal process doesn't have a time relationship to external things that's easy to identify.

31) M supposes its question of how and why do you get attracted to this type of work, whether that's because of a developing belief system that it draws us. M's was to change from a world of originally working in the law as a solicitor which would have been much more about pinning things down and knowing things which was rather unsatisfactory to her so there was a reaction to that. In psychotherapy there is there much room for not knowing which she thinks might reflect her own development stage.

32) M thinks that's why, in a strange sort of way holding on to the idea of the unknown is
like holding onto something firm because of that idea that you can argue anything from any angle and you can bring that into therapy work. You can take a particular phenomenon and look at it from different angles and you can say this proves so and so or it doesn’t prove it or but she thinks there’s something about the fact that you can just allow for it not to be known is important

33) M doesn’t see experience and theory as different she thinks the struggle to describe something is important but its also important not to then be giving the impression that you know what it is. Bion’s work gave her the impression from things like his grid that he developed was that he was in a way observing phenomena and just saying well this is what I see happen and when this happens this happens. There was quite a complicated, complex theoretical argument on one level but then he’s also able to allow for this unknown part

34 ME) Experience and theory are not seen as different although it is important not to give the impression you know. She sees Bion as having a theory like the grid which was just his way of saying what he observes. There was a complex theoretical argument on one level but he could also allow for the unknown part

34 ME) Along these lines M has been thinking about the way we talk around the edge of the no thing and what occurs because of it, a bit like the unconscious

35 ME) There has to be known as well as unknown which we have to struggle around and her fear of the new age hippy type thing comes in when you say oh its all unknown.

35 ME) There has to be known as well as unknown which we have to struggle around and her fear of the new age hippy type thing comes in when you say oh its all unknown.

37 ME) M feels she is not making a lot of sense and what happens when we lose a known area which gives confidence, the words disappear and she becomes a gibbering idiot

37 ME) M feels she is not making a lot of sense and what happens when we lose a known area which gives confidence, the words disappear and she becomes a gibbering idiot

38 ME) She likens this to the breaking down of boundaries and psychotic experience which to her is also like her experience of writing.

38 ME) She likens this to the breaking down of boundaries and psychotic experience which to her is also like her experience of writing.
39) M is thinking about her own sort of process of training and experience of analysis how in a way that has to be somewhere you can experience your own madness if you want to call it that

40) But again M is wary of Laing’s view because she thinks its too easy to go down that route and then deny the real pain and difficulty that people who have what we as a society call severe mental health problems or whatever. There’s an enormous amount of pain and difficulty in that and its in this area of to what extent that is a spiritual experience and a growth experience. She thinks it has the potential to be and certainly going back to people like Freud and Jung all had their period of madness or whatever you want to call it, an encounter with the unknown an encounter with the unconscious rather the unknown.

41) For M that comes back to living something, living with that unknown bit that we call madness which has that fear of the boundaries going and not knowing what is going on, there aren’t any anchor points and so on.

42) She supposes that our capacity to bear that is related to acknowledging something about the unknown and being able to bear that because its an unbearable terrifying thing really but there’s an underlying fear in all of us connected to a fear of annihilation really and a sort of letting go of everything known is like not existing.

43) It is not existing in its ultimate state and whether we fear it or not is another question which she thinks is connected to that spiritual idea of not being afraid of and can we truly live without a fear of death. That is a very high almost unachievable sort of spiritual aim and its connected, the unknown in her mind is something connected to the infinite where there isn’t a division between me and you one thing and another and existence is defined by division so if there isn’t a division there isn’t existence in a way that we describe it anyway and underlying real fear of that what would be not existence as we know it.

44) M sees that as what links these ideas of what we call madness, fear of losing my mind and she is glad she got to the thing about the infinite and the existence and division and so on because that’s something she has thought quite a lot about and the way

39 ME) The process of training and analysis is somewhere that you can experience your own madness

40 ME) Again she is wary of Laing’s view which can result in denying the real pain and difficulty that people experience. It is in this area though that lies a spiritual and growth experience. People like Freud and Jung all had their period of madness or encounter with the unknown or the unconscious rather than unknown.

41 ME) M brings it back to living with the unknown bit that we call madness which has the fear of the boundaries going, not knowing, no anchor points.

42 ME) Our capacity to bear the madness is related to acknowledging the unknown and bearing the terrifying underlying fear of annihilation because letting go of everything known is like not existing.

43 ME) The ultimate state is not existing and the question of whether we can live without a fear of death. This spiritual aim is connected to the unknown and the infinite where there is no division between me and you one thing and another. Existence on the other hand is defined by division which is the only way we can describe it.

44 ME) This is what links ideas of what we call madness, fear of losing my mind. She is glad she got to the infinite, existence and division as she has thought about it a lot and the way we defend against that terrible fear.
45) M sees division bit in terms of existence and the minute we begin to speak or conceive of ourselves we're thinking of something in terms of giving it a name and defining it as opposed to something else.

45 ME) Division involves the minute we speak or conceive of ourselves we name or define it as opposed to something else.
Paul

Discriminated Meaning Units

1) P makes a distinction between the unknown and the unknowable so to him the unknown is something that is actually happening to someone or something is in the air the either and they know about and are either unconscious to it or they can’t disclose it or are working towards disclosing it and in practice it might be information that comes out in the sessions or comes out through doing the work

2) He considers that a very separate category to the unknowable which is more to do with even if you knew the exact place and position of every atom in the universe we still don’t know what it would do so its much more in relation to quantum physics and things like that the idea that certain things cannot be known until they happen because we don’t know which way the cookies crumble

3) In P’s experience both students and clients can get the unknown and the unknowable confused particularly those that want some kind of certainty so they get confused about levels of certainty.

4) The unknowable he thinks is a quality to be, it actually affects the way we do psychotherapy and it also effects the way people might live their lives or it might actually be transformative in peoples’ lives to know that certain things are unknowable because it takes the edge off them trying to come to closure all the time which is different from the unknown where they’re trying to get to the bottom of something and get it in a sense diagnosed and worked with and solved

5) The difference is that we just don’t know how to do it from the point of view of the observer we don’t always know what’s just unknown and what is unknowable as the two look the same. He refers to the silence at the beginning of the interview and how at the beginning of this it was unknown and unknowable until we sort it out

6) P thinks there are two very different categories of experience, he means the unknowable might arise more from the fact that there are just certain things that he doesn’t know about the researcher and what she might be thinking and there are things about him that

Salient features and meanings related to the phenomenon – the unknown

1) For P there is a difference between the unknown and the unknowable. The unknown is something happening to someone that they know about but are either unconscious to, cannot disclose or are working towards disclosing.

2) The unknowable is different and even when we know some things we cannot predict what will happen in the future

3) P feels that students and clients get these confused especially when they want certainty

4) The unknowable is a quality which effects our practice of psychotherapy and how people live their lives. In fact it might transform peoples lives to know that certain things are unknowable because it takes the edge off their need for closure whereas the unknown is about trying to diagnose and solve problems.

5) The therapist as the observer also gets confused between the unknown and the unknowable although in the silence at the beginning of an interaction both are possibilities

6) P links this to the unknown between himself and the researcher who do not know what each other are thinking although there are things known to themselves
The researcher doesn’t know that he might be thinking things that are perfectly known to him

7) As P and the researcher haven’t got a relationship in the silence we’re finding our way like where do we connect and in time it he thinks it will become clearer as more about becomes known about each other so more things that are unknown come into the picture and are known

8) P thinks that unknowable is another whole level of experience which is to do with being in any encounter where people come together and they cannot predict the outcome and they cannot predict what they will do from moment to moment so he thinks it’s the equivalent of what in some circles is called the ninth wave, eight waves in the universe are predictable and the ninth is unpredictable

9) He thinks that would fit in with what modern science is saying which is getting away from the Newtonian idea that there’s a cause and always an effect. He thinks that only operates in a limited sphere and what the quantum physicists will tell you is that most of what goes on in the universe is unpredictable so in human affairs that also means even if he knew the researcher and she knew him we don’t know what will be born in one moment

10) The idea that if we put all the factors in that each person knows of then suddenly we can predict what’s happening, we can only do that in a very crude way based on past experience, we don’t know what will happen moment by moment. He thinks this has very very profound effects on the practice of psychotherapy because it affects the way we inadvertently structure sessions

11) For example James Hillman was talking about this the other week when he was talking when a question was asked of him about why he’s not particularly bound or big on the psychoanalytic tradition of childhood and how that affects what goes on now. He said a in very few cultures do people assume that what happened in your childhood effects who you are now. So somebody in the audience made a very logical objection and said but how you are in your childhood is bound to affect who you are now. He said the problem with this is that if you introduce these narratives into therapy the client will subsequently structure their thinking along your lines. This is different to recognising that we do not know which is more phenomenological
12) P thinks phenomenology would embrace the unknowable not just the unknown as it would hold the principle that we cannot know something until it happens so we can predict that something might happen but we can’t say the effects until

13) In P’s view there is a strong danger in psychotherapy that you reduce people to past processes rather than look at perhaps aspects or quality of character of nature of somebody’s nature which often um means that they may produce things against the odds or against expectations and this effects the way we hypothesise and diagnose people because in a way we end up boxing them within our theories and models and then start to work with them as though they fit in with our theories and then we react to them as a person who, for example, depressed.

14) P has known people who are capable of the most remarkable changes of quality and action which aren’t traceable to anything observable or what we’ve talked about. They suddenly discover inner resources that appear to come from nowhere, obviously they come from hidden qualities of character or whatever but to some extent they’re unknowable such as the character played by Shelley Winters who suddenly becomes a heroine in The Poseidon Adventure

15) So feats of character emerge in situations so until the situation arises we can’t know what stuff people are made of. So for P this is where the distinction between the unknown and the unknowable is. He thinks there may be things he just doesn’t know about himself and he suddenly discovers he has these inner resources within but what’s unknowable is exactly what he will do in that moment

16) P teaches sub personality theory that we are made up of different parts or aspects of character which are all sorts of different developmental attributes such as child like, more adult so them names which are arbitrary names or labels describe clusters of needs and experiences and behaviours. If we look at this in a Newtonian way as a fixed number of these defined by our character and our upbringing this is who we are and we make the best of it and different parts will be evoked in a particular setting. That would be looking at it from the point of view of the known to the unknown and the idea that I don’t know myself and the more I bring into awareness the more liberated I can be as a human being

12 P) For P phenomenology embraces the unknowable as well as the unknown and the principle that we cannot predict the effects of what may happen

13 P) For P this relates to a danger in psychotherapy of reducing people to past processes and hypothesising and diagnosing and working with them as though they fit with our theories because we react to them as though they are what we think they are. Whereas qualities of character mean that people can produce the unexpected.

14 P) Like the character played by Shelley Winters in the Poseidon Adventure people can suddenly discover inner resources that are unknowable and appear come from nowhere

15 P) These feats of character include things that P doesn’t know about himself which he discover, but what he will do as a result is unknowable until the moment

16 P) In his teaching of sub personality theory P believes that we label all these different character traits which are really arbitrary in order to describe clusters of needs, behaviours and experiences we then look at these in a Newtonian way as the known to the unknown seeking to bring these unknowns to awareness in order to be liberated.
17) P says he has introduced another aspect which comes more from post modernism which is that sub personalities are born and die every moment and they’re not always products of the past, they’re not set in stone. Sometimes we can give the impression that these things are all there and are just ready to be brought into consciousness and we know ourselves better. He thinks that’s true up to a point that being from the unknown to the known but there is also the unknowable.

18) The unknowable is at anyone moment like bubbles in carbonated water where the bubbles appear to come from nowhere and they’re always popping up so bubbles are new characteristics about ourselves can appear from nowhere and be constellated and we only know they’re constellated when there’s an occasion like the Poseidon Adventure type occasion that will pose us with something new so in that sense we can never fully know who we are and in that sense there’s always part of us we never thought we had and its not that they were buried there or they were things waiting to be unearthed, they come into being he thinks moment by moment.

19) P thinks the essence of the phenomenological approach is that every situation would be potentially fresh anew even though it may resemble past situations you know there may be factors in it which are unknown and which are new so even if you find yourself with another client or another therapist and time moves on and things aren’t exactly the same, they’re similar but they’re not exactly the same.

20) P thinks that if we keep open the possibility that there is an unknowable at every moment it keeps the work fresh and stops us getting boxed up in our theories about people.

21) P goes on to say that in a therapy training context this creates more problems cause we have to make judgements about people and the judgements we make can only be up to what we know now and knowing that the likely prognosis towards the future.

22) But people can go through their own remarkable transformations and we certainly hold that as possible in psychosynthesis but these transformations exist independently of having worked through all your stuff from the past all your baggage that you have these experiences or whatever can happen quite autonomously. You can’t predict it you can.
23) So for P all we can say is that by the end of the time scale you haven’t reached certain places we expect you to have reached, we’re entitled to say that because we’re in the business of training people but we’re not making statements about how some one is going to be for the rest of their life and that’s the same thing with clients.

24) P thinks we need to hold the view that a certain amount of any interaction between people is unknowable, it keeps the process very humble it keeps the therapist very humble particularly in relation to power.

25) In considering the issues of the unknown for himself P speaks of the transference and the counter transference in any one moment as unknowable up to point. He is not saying everything’s up for grabs there could be suddenly the emergence of a very strange or unexpected feeling which doesn’t fit with what’s been said or where the client is. He thinks this is very often best looked at under the concept of Eros as the erotic in the general sense rather than the strict sense of the word, as something comes alive or is brought alive and suddenly enters into the space and that mixes in.

26) P introduces the idea of hope as a related area in this whole discussion so while he thinks the concept of the unknowable as, opposed to the unknown, is really important in giving rise to hope.

27) P illustrates this idea with the hypothetical story of some one who has been depressed all their lives and as far as they know they dig deep and think if they know more maybe it will cure the depression. So they embark on a project of working on what’s unknown or what’s unconscious to try and dredge it up bring it up do the dutiful thing in a way work on in therapy and they’ve done everything they’ve done everything and they are still depressed so they start to lose hope because they don’t particularly think that there’s anything more that’s unknown. He compares this with starting from the point that a lot of things are unknowable which opens up the possibility for spontaneous change or transformations that doesn’t come from any known course so are unknowable.

28) For P the true source of hope or faith I and he would them within the same category in the sense that they’re both aspects of unknowability. He does not mean faith in the sense of sort of Christian sense of unshakeable
faith in but faith in the unknowable that something will happen even if we couldn’t say we have some sense something will happen and I think that gives that’s very helpful in psychotherapy when people look back over their lives they look at the potential future and they can’t see any grounds for hope they’re doing it on the basis of the known of relationship to the known and the unknown you know if they do a bit more work on themselves they’ll change their circumstances the unknown will suddenly become known and then it will be solved and so that’s only correct up to a point there’s that whole vast area beyond where you couldn’t say what will happen tomorrow you can only have the best estimate

29) P draws an analogy with sub atomic physics which would say that at the sub atomic level these bubbles if you like these sub atomic bubbles affect things in unpredictable ways this is partly chaos theory and so on. But this is beyond that because sub atomically you can’t determine what an atom will be because its not visible its not measurable, observable visible or whatever until it happens. So physics is concerned with phenomenology so it its not about being able to knowledgeably have predictions its nothing to do with that in fact it’s a whole other order of thinking.

30) He think it is not as easy as its seems to get into that other order of thinking because people’s mind sets are still based on the idea that if they knew more that was unknown they could be more predictive but physics, his understanding is that physics is disproving it so by its nature its not predictive

31) On considering bow be has learned about the unknown P says that very little has come from formal training and he is a great believer in what most people end up finding useful actually hasn’t come from anything they’ve been formally taught and he says he stresses the word formally cause in looking back at things that have moved him, some of them were things said by trainers and teachers and therapists but they weren’t said as something they were planning to say necessarily. They were often asides in the coffee break or a bit of humour dropped in

32) As a teacher he doesn’t like overly set curricula although some trainers want to know what they are supposed to cover. He doesn’t like working in that way because he thinks it stops the interesting highways and bye ways where people do their real learning. He is

29 P) P uses an analogy with sub atomic physics to illustrate things which are not visible, measurable or observable and effect things in unpredictable ways. So this kind of physics like phenomenology is nothing to do with predictability and like the unknowable is an other order of thinking

30 P) It is not easy to get into that way of thinking because people want to know more that is unknown in order to be more predictive

31 P) P feels that very little of his learning about the unknown has come from formal teaching and training and things that have moved him have been things that teachers and trainers didn’t plan to say and were often asides or a bit of humour dropped in

32 P) A teacher himself he doesn’t like overly set curricula because it stops the highways and bye ways where people do their real learning. He is more interested in imagination and instinct for something
much more interested in this sort of training that people come out with some imagination and depth with instinct for something rather than them having pursued a formal sort of curriculum.

33) He is also in favour of bringing in references to things which are nothing to do with therapy and so encourages people to bring in experiences from books and films and travel and just observations of the world

34) In looking at himself P thinks that some of where he gets things from is unknowable and other things are to do with what he chooses to observe in everyday life especially by watching what it is that people are open to and what they observe that makes the difference about what they learn. He thinks peoples' ability to observe is a great leveller because it doesn't reduce learning to those people who are academic and those who are non academic in fact things that make a difference are peoples' ability to observe and make something of their observations whether internal observations or external observations

35) P thinks you can teach people to value it and you can train people to observe like the Taoists would say you can learn a lot by sitting in a bamboo you know you need to know about bamboo you have to draw it for years on end and you might understand something of bamboo so training people to observe can somehow not be taught but by being inculcated

36) Another way is to put into the equation all sorts of things which P thinks are very very useful which don't form part of any psychological theory such as how things even walking along the street never work out the way you think so everybody would say they know from experience that things very rarely turn out the way they planned now if you could convert an observation like that into a theory about predictability it would be quite useful but

37) what P often finds is that people don't necessarily translate the everyday into how they understand people psychologically and psychotherapeutically they seem to be in different worlds. He thinks this is because the practice of therapy of psychotherapy has become split off from everyday experience unnecessarily
38) So for example P says he will give a flippant example of a therapist who at a certain point takes the client out of the therapy room and goes and plays football in the park now in terms of what we’re measuring as good psychotherapy that would be breaking the boundaries and be considered not therapy but from another standpoint if the therapist and the client between them made an estimation that what has never happened and needs to is some spontaneity some sense of play or and it might be a very appropriate thing to do but psychotherapy students who understandably are trying to learn the rules unfortunately see this as a terrible thing to do cause it breaks the rules whereas once you have more life experience, you know when you can chuck the rules away, although you can’t just arbitrarily choose to chuck the rules away even where things come instinctively you have to go to reflect afterwards and say why this was actually very useful

39) He gives an everyday example of how observations are very important where some one disregards what their experience such as when some one has been ill after eating in a restaurant and afterwards they say there was something funny about the food disregarded the instinct. This could be translated into that way of looking at the world and disregarding things you know by observing things very carefully

40) One way P has learned is that he has observed over the years that all sorts of people have very hidden characteristics, they are perhaps unknown which are slightly and sufficiently out of character to suggest that there’s more to people than meets the eye. So somebody who should be in a bad mood that day is not or somebody we think would like the way we’ve written something but they actually like it done another way and he is very interested in the things that don’t fit about people and learning to observe them and pick them up. He has learned not to disregard the slight inconsistencies of fit with how things look and with what my perception my concept of that person so out of that he came to a gradual view that things are probably more unpredictable and unknowable than we give them credit for

41) P thinks this is because we’re trained in life not to trust unsupported instincts but that’s a process of learned helplessness such as oh restaurant wouldn’t get this wrong but they do

38 P) The ability to respond spontaneously comes from learning the rules and then knowing when to chuck them away

39 P) One problem though is that people are also disconnected from observation from their experience such as when some one has been ill after eating in a restaurant and afterwards they say there was something funny about the food

40 P) Feels he has learned not to disregard even slight inconsistencies in people and between his perception and knowledge of some one. This has led him to the view that things are probably more unpredictable and unknowable than we give them credit for

4 P) One problem is that we are trained in life not to trust our unsupported experiences
42) He thinks it's a concept of training which is subtle so when he run training courses he doesn't over prepare but has a loose tool kit so, it's a bit like a plumber who is called out somewhere plumber doesn't know which size spanner he's gonna need or whether it will be a spanner or something else, so as regards training he comes with a loose tool kit which is largely in his head and depending on what that's unknowable come up into the room he will run with it in that way so no two courses will be exactly the same

42 P) When he is running a training course he starts with what he calls a loose tool kit and depending on what comes he will run so no two course are exactly the same

43) P doesn't want to go away saying well that was all very interesting but it doesn't deal with the things they really want to know so he would rather operate by creating the space where the things that people really want to know would emerge and then we can deal with it

43 P) He does this because he wants to operate by creating the space where the things that people really want to know would emerge and then we can deal with it

44) P goes on to talk about the way students see teachers part of which is connected to something which is in the tranderence and is the idealisation. Something in idealisation which has taught him is that an idealised figure is more in control than the students and it's a great revelation to realise that the idealised figure is not in control and there's no greater grasp of certainty. He thinks therefore that there's a confusion in the culture between idealisation and certainty. An idealised figure would be a an expert but if we can get people away from that idea it liberates idealisation from the power game as in the Wizard of Oz. Dorothy and her friends work on the assumption that the wizard will know and at a certain point she says you're a very bad man and he says no I'm a good man but a poor wizard. P feels it is very important to know the distinction

44 P) Another aspect of the unknowable is that students tend to idealise their teachers thinking they are in control and it is a great revelation for them to realise that this person is not in control and does not have a grasp on certainty but if we can get people away from that idea it liberates idealisation from the power game as in the Wizard of Oz. Dorothy and her friends work on the assumption that the wizard will know and at a certain point she says you're a very bad man and he says no I'm a good man but a poor wizard.

45) As where old buildings were built without recognition of how they would be used and adapted in the future whereas now things are not fixed so much P thinks the same can be true about therapy processes. He doesn't want to fall into the trap of a lot of therapy training or therapy thinking which is the idea that everything about us is reducible to processes such as transference although he still thinks there's an us at back of it its just that we don't we can't ever say with certainty what the us is

45 P) P uses the example of the way the use of old buildings was not foreseeable and that it is better not to have things so fixed. This illustrate the unknown in therapy and the trap of reducing everything about us to processes whereas P believes there is a self even if we cannot say what it is

46) So for P we can never really say I know you, I have met something approximating you, but I can never grab hold of your I ness and meet it. It can be hard grasp that you can

46 P) So as in the interview when two people meet they only meet something approximating the other. One can never truly grasp the other
never fully meet the I of the other. So who you are when I've internalised you is always gonna be out of date, what you did this moment might be very different and how you might act the next moment.

47) One way that P has learnt about that really sort of bolted him into it was when he did a few years on the BACP complaints committee. What he saw from that position was however convincing people looked in writing or face to face things are never what they seem and it was a very humbling experience. There's a lovely book a novel called "an instance in the finger post" by Ian Peirce and it's a story of a murder set in restoration England and its five little books telling the same series of events but written by five different and suddenly you see the world from what they knew and what was going on for them and their part in it and you don't know until the last two to three pages.

48) You realise is that each person in the plot and some of them were very distinguished academics that were based on real people actually thought they new on the basis of their expertise but either they didn't know everything or the facts were unknown or some things there's no way they could have known.

49) P sees what we are talking about here is the unknown not necessarily talking about the unknowable, but more about the unknown so you hear a client's version of something you hear the supervisor's view of something you hear the ex therapists version of something. So there's different things that become known depending on the type of encounter you have.

50) For P these ideas are good enough because there is always the shifting balance between the known and the unknown and the unknowable tends to affect the balance. So Freud did say certain things for example but he couldn't prove them like neuroscience, he didn't say they were unknowable he said that they were unknown at this time we don't have the means for knowing. He was making the distinction between what was unknowable and what was just unknown now.

51) when the unknowable feeds back into the it, it helps us realise how much of what we know we don't know such as a certain point where people really did believe they knew that the sun went round the earth, they really knew it, it's only history that led them to believe that they didn't know, so although there known things we even need to hold that lightly or fully meet the I ness of the other. So who you are to me is always out of date.

47 P) P learned about this when he did a few years on the BACP complaints committee. He realised that however convincing people looked in writing or face to face things are never what they seem and it was a very humbling experience. As in a novel by Ian Peirce people see the same situation differently.

48 P) You cannot rely solely on your expertise and can never know all the facts.

49 P) These are all unknowns which become known, the different versions as in therapy where you hear the client's or your supervisor's for example.

50 P) These ideas are good enough because knowing is always shifting and the unknowable tends to affect the balance between the known and the unknown. Indeed Freud pointed out that he was making a distinction between what was unknowable and what was unknown at the time.

51 P) The unknowable continues though and helps us realise that much of what we know is more what we believe as in the idea of that the sun went round the earth. Even things that are known need to be held lightly.
Rachel

Discriminated Meaning Units

1) R actually does think a lot about the unknown and she thinks it hasn’t necessarily come through training but its very much there now with her therapy and its very much there with her own life and feelings about things

2) She says it probably did come from her training as well, that maybe opened her eyes to it certainly. In the last three or four years her eyes began to be opened to the fact that she doesn’t know and that none of us really can count on anything that we can’t look at our clients and think we know what’s going on there because constantly they surprise her anyway

3) It’s also in her own life and she doesn’t know if it’s relevant really but she thinks it’s a whole package and the fact that she has become aware in recent times that there is a great unknown a great deal that we cannot know about. So if she feels that in her own life she thinks she must certainly feel that with her clients which she does

4) She supposes in a way it’s about religion too. She says she is not religious and doesn’t have a feeling that there’s a God but on the other hand she doesn’t know there maybe something. It may be just a spirituality and in herself so there’s a certain feeling of a lack of confidence because of not knowing. On the other hand a comforting feeling about not knowing cause then all there for finding out about

5) R thinks that’s incredibly important when she is with her clients and then can sit back and may be have room for reverie and let them speak what they want to speak and pick up on it in the here and now rather than try to pin everything on the early stage of life although she still believes that we are very affected by what has happened in our life time possibly even before

6) She questions how can we be sure what we’re talking about as the moment that you start to talk about the unknown you don’t know and where can you go with that. I’d imagine you can go to all sorts of places with that but its very difficult to get hold of it. And I find that quite difficult to explain quite

Salient features and meanings related to the phenomenon – the unknown

1R) R has thought a lot about the unknown and it hasn’t necessarily came about through training and is with her more in therapy her life and feelings about things

2 R) She then thinks it probably did come through training as well which opened her eyes to the fact that none of us know and we cannot know what is going on with our clients who constantly surprise her

3 R) The unknown is a whole package in life and she has become aware that there is a great deal in life we cannot know

4 R) In a way the unknown is about religion too although R is not religious and although she doesn’t think there is a god she realises that she doesn’t know and there may be spirituality. Not knowing creates a lack of confidence and on the other hand not knowing is comforting because it then all there to find out.

5 R) Not knowing is incredibly important in practice because it makes room for reverie and letting clients speak what they want to speak leading to a mixture of working in the here and now as well as the way we are affected by our past yet without trying to pin it down

6 R) The moment you start to talk about the unknown you don’t know, it could lead anywhere, is difficult to get hold of and yet there is so much unknown about life like will I be here tomorrow. So we cannot count on anything
difficult to decide what to run with if you like. She feels all she can really say about the unknown is that it's unknown and there is so much that's unknown about her own life like will I be here tomorrow will I be here for the 2012 Olympics. So there's something about not being able to count on anything

7) R's initial training in psychotherapy was very much psychodynamic and she still thinks in some ways psychodynamically cause she does feel that our clients, ourselves, everybody picks up things all the way along through their lives from people they know from their parents their carers and so on but we can't know that because our clients quite possibly tell us a story about their lives which may be true but might not be and she feel that's unknown. Even what she says about herself and her past sometimes isn't and she wonders whether it was really like that, does she know so maybe its quite a good feeling to feel that um it opens things up if you don't know if you're not set in concrete, if you're not saying well actually this is how it is

8) She queries how can she know what happened all those years ago and how she can only possibly have picked up from what other people possibly have told her. There's certain things going on in her memory but have they been altered along the way so we cannot be sure about anything. She got these ideas from reading philosophy and all sorts of people and philosophers who made her stop and think about what is knowledge?

9) She remembers years and years ago that she knew everything about most things and now realises the more she knows the less she knows. A favourite saying is what her grandmother used to say don't teach your grandmother to suck eggs and thanks whoever for the fact that here she is at her great age still learning

10) It could almost make one think what is the point of learning anything if we can't never know anything but that isn't the reaction she has to it. Yes there is a tension a constant feeling of wanting to know yeah wanting to know more and more and more

11) R supposes we can know some things but what we can't be sure of is those things are going to be the same in the next minute because they are changing so its not set in concrete its actually friable and mobile and all of those things. Things change so we cannot be sure that when our clients come to us one night
that uh they’re going to me in the same kind of mind, feeling in the same way as when they came the previous night

12) so I suppose we have to leave ourselves open to the different attitudes and different feelings from them. And it extends possibilities if you can not be sure of something if you can actually gain from that because it becomes more fluid

13) R doesn’t know whether she is able to enable her clients to understand this bit about the unknown, how can we ever know that we’re getting them to see things that way but we do see change in our clients but what is that change and what brought it about? Is it just being with some one who’s prepared just to hang loose and feel they don’t know or not? Some clients desperately want to know and maybe they are the ones that leave, because they can’t cope with that idea. It’s a struggle I mean just doing this and talking about it is a struggle and I think equally it’s a struggle within the session with a client to hang back and not know

14) R says she does know about the unknown for example she sat there for half an hour waiting to see whether the Olympic bid was going to London or not and a very big unknown was just whether how sick was she gonna feel if they didn’t get it and of course she still doesn’t know that because of course they got it and that’s how many things in ones life can be like that. She certainly won’t know because she can have an idea that she would have been upset but would she have got over it quickly and walked away and thought well that’s life you know

15) She also asks do our clients when they are disappointed with us and they come to us and they go away not knowing anything more than they knew before when they came in, do they feel sick? Or do they think well this is part of the process and come back again and try again still not get the answers or maybe feel they are getting the answers cause certainly some do.

16) R’s own unknowns in life and she would go back to religion and not feeling that there’s god and what happens at the end of life you don’t know when its going to end and what happens after that and I mean the unknown as that was something she can look at now and wonder about and couldn’t do that before she’d recognised that there is so much unknown. She asks: how long will I be here and how long will my family be here and it

12 R) Leaving ourselves open to the ways our clients change means we have to remain unsure which extends possibilities

13 R) It is difficult to let another person understand this view of the unknown because it is brought about by just being with some one who is prepared to hang loose and feel they don’t know. Perhaps the ones who desperately want to know will leave

14 R) However one reacts to a situation, such as the Olympic bid being awarded to London, you can never know how you would have reacted

15 R) Not knowing can be disappointing so some people leave and some see it as part of the process

16 R) The unknowns in R’s life could take her back to religion and the comfort of believing in an afterlife but for R the unknown of death and afterwards are things she can recognise and face now
would be so comforting to feel that there was
an afterlife that and I could be sat with various
people who have gone before me. But she
doesn’t think she will so that is unknown

17) R says we are in a dichotomy now, just
now she was saying its almost comfortable not
knowing and maybe it wouldn’t be comforting
knowing that she would be sat with all these
people maybe it would be quite difficult

18) She feels she is not being very helpful and
not giving the researcher what she wants but
she doesn’t know what she wants

19) And isn’t that difficult too and that’s a
rhetorical question that being open to not
getting what you want so maybe you don’t
even know what you want in the first place and
maybe our clients come with not knowing
what they want. She thinks that most of them
don’t know what they want cause they don’t
know what they are gonna get

20) Having queried whether this interview is
like therapy because of the undivided attention
and the danger of thinking she knows what the
researcher wants R says she thinks you want to
know how I feel about the unknown and where
I learned about it

21) She thinks its just been an evolving
process within her that she could lay at the
door of education the sort of education that
she’s had because it opened up her mind to
thinking about the unknown

22) T thinks at the beginning she sort of denied
it had anything to do with the training and she
had a vague sort of feeling at the beginning
because there has been a struggle within her all
her life so maybe she was right for the training
if you like but she doesn’t even know that
really because she is so different now to the
way she was before she started ten, eleven
years ago but maybe she wouldn’t have gone
into this particular profession if she hadn’t
been right for that in a way

23) R feels it wasn’t that she didn’t want to
acknowledge it but it was this feeling that
maybe she has been struggling with it all her
life and the training was a part of it and
somehow or other in saying that she felt that
she had denied the training. She didn’t plonk
herself down in the midst of training and learn
that there is an unknown. She has been
struggling with it for years and maybe couldn’t
have articulated that until the training came
along

17 R) But then R thinks whether knowing she
would meet all these others in the afterlife
might not be comforting

18 R) R feels she is not being very helpful and
not giving the researcher what she wants but
she doesn’t know what she wants

19 R) You have to be open to not getting what
you want because you don’t know what you
are going to get

20 R) The struggle in the interview and what
the researcher wants, as different from therapy,
which she thinks is what she feels about the
unknown and where she learned about it

21R) Learning about the unknown has been an
evolving process which she could lay at the
door of the sort of education that has opened
up her mind to thinking about the unknown

22 R) At the beginning R realises she denied
that training had anything to do with this
learning. She has a vague feeling that what
made her right for the training was her lifelong
struggle. However she feels she cannot be sure
because she is so different now to when she
started.

23 R) Its not so much that she doesn’t want to
acknowledge the training but more the feeling
that this is a lifelong struggle that training is a
part of although maybe she couldn’t have
articulated this struggle until the training came
along.
24) Maybe psychotherapy and counselling opens up what is already there with our clients too you know there’s a lot of this in all of us that just needs tapping into. If she has a desire it is that all people should come to this position of being able to doubt and look around and think well maybe its not like that and maybe it shouldn’t be like that. That’s quite difficult feeling quite strongly as she can get quite angry with people who are set in one particular not just talking about clients although that might be there is some anger there as well.

25) When she started this she didn’t know she could talk as long as she has on it but somehow feels that she is not talking enough about it. She was terrified that only a few minutes in she would completely dry up but somehow there’s something about your question that is fascinating

26) R wondered what it is about training that draws attention to the unknown and thinks there are trainings that don’t do that. She supposes in a way she is reluctant to pat everybody on the back and say weren’t they good, maybe she has as it did wonderful things for me. It enabled her to be brave enough to look at herself and see how it might be. She doesn’t know but thinks that’s probably true because if she hadn’t gone down that particular road she wouldn’t be where she is now. If she had just stopped dead at the end of the diploma training she would be in a different place probably but doesn’t know

27) She just cannot imagine how life would have been different to what it is now but thinks it might have been constricted and not just talking about being a psychotherapist but she is talking about being a person. She feels that she would not get the enjoyment out of life that she gets now albeit that some of that’s sad and some of its very happy. She doesn’t think she would be in as good a place as now had she not done that training.

28) She goes on to say she doesn’t know what the resistance is then. She thinks she tends to forget just how hard it was yes you are coming up against yourself in a really difficult way when you’re doing that but very worth while and of course to bring it back to the theme which quite naturally happened for me then you don’t know its going to be hard work when you set out on it and when you’re in it there’s certainly something about oh I’ve gotta get through this and enormous pleasure at this stage in having come this far

24 R) Likewise maybe counselling and psychotherapy opens up what is already there with our clients. This position of doubt and looking around us and thinking is what she desires for others and she can get quite angry with people who have one particular set.

25 R) The question of the unknown is terrifying because she didn’t know if she could talk about it enough but also fascinating

26 R) Whilst she is reluctant to pat everyone on the back and say how good they were she does realise that training did wonderful things for her mainly in being brave enough to look at herself although she cannot know what would have happened if she had stopped at her first training.

27 R) Although she does not know how life would have been she thinks it would have been constricted, not just as a psychotherapist, but as a person and she would not be enjoying the sadness and the happiness

28 ml) R wonders about her resistance to acknowledging the training but realises she forgets how hard it was to come up against your self. She feels she didn’t know how hard it was going to be or when you are in it but there is enormous pleasure in having come this far
29) So it's been painful and its painful with the clients too to watch them and painful with the people you've known and loved for these years because the change is so desperate for them cause she is certainly not the person she was when she got married and had children so they've all had to try and change their view of her and still manage to stay with her. And that's not been easy to the extent that if any one who was close to her wanted to go into therapy she would have to think whether she would want them to go into therapy or not because the change in them would possibly quite painful to her. She has thought about if her children wanted to go into therapy and there have been times when she wanted them to go into therapy and she had to think well what are they going to find out about themselves and what are they going to find out about me in therapy and would that be very uncomfortable.

30) R thinks being a member of a group was hugely informative, starting way back ten years ago in groups and learning that almost everywhere we go we are actually going to be reacting to family members. She doesn't know what that has to do with the unknown but supposes that was unknown to her that that was going to happen and it has now become so obvious that she will react to people in a certain way and according to the way she probably has done throughout her life even though now she's got a little bit of knowledge about what's happening what actually taps into my what makes me react so groups group work

31) She also thinks all the literature, the reading she has done has helped but she feels she is so far away from it now that she is having a problem trying to think what the particular people were. um Levinas and reading about being face to face to and being with someone and not knowing who they are but actually being there for them, her responsibility to them and not knowing what that will bring out from her clients and being aware that that is one of the most useful tools you can have

32) Constantly being questioned she thinks in supervision, just constantly being afraid to open her mouth and say what it was that had happened in the room with the client because of the questioning that was going around and the feeling that she just couldn't get it right which enabled me to come away thinking well maybe you're not getting it right and maybe
you’re never getting it right so that was big learning

33) And that is ok we can the struggle to try and get it right. She supposes the struggle is trying to be ok and then we can be just about ok with our clients. She hates to say a better person doesn’t quite know what would cover it but knowing ourselves well enough to just be with that other person in the room who doesn’t know but is a sounding board for some one who needs to try and find something out about themselves

34) Then R says she went up with that aeroplane, which went overhead, then she wondered if it was coming back from ? You drifted off into the garden yeah a very significant garden because she and her husband stood there and this was a terrible house when we bought it. We fell in love, we castected with the garden and there was something unknown there in knowing it was the right lie and knowing it was the right place to be and the right time.

35) So what else in that training well there was just so much it was so full and so awful and yet so wonderful and she means the Post grad course and the day one of not knowing and whatever the last day was still not knowing and yet knowing an awful lot too. You can only really explain that to some one else who has done it she thinks

36) R speaks of knowing and unknowing and there are quite obvious things that we do know such as sitting here and you’re sitting there and I know when my clients are in the room and so on. But she doesn’t know what to expect from them and they don’t know what to expect from her and she doesn’t know what to expect from herself either under those circumstances because that is something that just happens and anything can come out of it or nothing can come out of it

37) Obviously there quite obvious knowns but she says that maybe she doesn’t understand what the unknown is or maybe you’re out there on some other unknown and I haven’t tapped into that yet. Maybe the unknown is different for everybody. She says she read something about it the other day in Paul Gordon’s book Face to Face and he alludes to the unknown in there and she thinks its something that I can’t grab but then maybe I’m not supposed to grab it.

33 R) It is ok to struggle to try and get it right which leads us to feel ok with the struggle to be with our clients as knowing ourselves means we can be a sounding board for the other and their struggle

34 R) As an aeroplane goes overhead R is reminded of the garden and how although this house was terrible when they bought it they fell in love with the garden. There was something unknown in knowing it was the right place to be

35 R) Her second training was so awful and so wonderful and the not knowing was there on day one and on the last day it was still there along with knowing a lot too.

36 R) Knowing and unknowing are both present so there are obvious things we know like we are sitting here but we do not know what to expect from each other or from ourselves so in a particular situation something just happens, anything can happen or nothing can come out of it

37 R) While there are knowns R doesn’t understand what the unknown is and maybe it is different to us. She read something of this in Paul Gordon’s book where he alludes to the unknown as something we cannot grab and maybe we are not supposed to
38) R thinks that what she is saying is that she is beginning not to find it unbearable, because when you first talk about it it is unbearable but that you can be ok with it eventually. She thinks this may just be a huge defence but the idea that there is this stretch of unknown out there in front probably at one stage would have been unbearable but is no longer. She also thinks there might be there in front of her things that she can’t bear to look at possibly.

39) The death of family members and her own death but only because she doesn’t want to give up on this wonderful life she is having and would hate to go now because there’s so much more she wants to do. The fact that she will be going off as something she I doesn’t know about isn’t the problem as she has given up on the idea of going up to heaven and being with these lovely people she knows.

40) R doesn’t have a faith and thinks a lot of people get through on a faith that maybe takes them through that not knowing that they don’t have to not know. She thinks though that for her clients which she keeps trying to bring it back to, because she can’t tell them what to do but can only be with them and hope that they will find the answers for themselves or pick up something in the room that’s going on

41) The final thing R wanted to say about the unknown and her knowledge and how this has been helpful and is tapping into resources that one doesn’t know one has, doing something like that. She thinks for her in a way it was quite painful because its going back its like going back and you are remembering things that dawned on her as time has gone on some quite difficult things

38 R) When you first talk about the unknown it is unbearable but R is beginning not to find the unknown unbearable although this might be a defence as the idea of the thought of unknown things ahead might be unbearable to look at.

39 R) The death of family members and her own death are difficult because she does not want to leave this wonderful life yet rather than the idea of leaving for something unknown. She has given up on the idea of going to heaven and being with lovely people she knows

40 R) R doesn’t have a faith and thinks it can be a way of getting through not knowing because then people don’t have to not know

41 R) R wanted to say of the unknown and her knowledge is that it has been helpful in tapping into resources she doesn’t know she has and painful because going back over her learning less her to remember things that dawned her as time passed.
Jenny

Discriminated Meaning Units

1) For J the client is totally unknown and what they’re going to come to is totally unknown, who she is going to be meeting and then there’s that unknown space when you do meet there’s that space in the middle that, it’s like there’s two lots of boundaries then, it’s that bit in the middle where they can go and she has got her boundaries, but it’s that unknown bit in the middle which is the exciting part.

2) She has been thinking a lot about that and is not sure if the research put it into her mind but every, sort of every other client at the moment seems to be, they can’t cope with the unknown with the not knowing and they’ve all got problems where every body else is in control of what’s going on for them and it’s like their powerless for example, some body is in the process of splitting up their business but it’s all in his partner’s hands about how quickly he does it because the client needs money out the business and it.

3) The situation where that client is what it’s doing to him and how it’s effecting him and that, that unknown situation, you can’t move forward and you can’t move back you don’t know where you are and are sort of powerlessness.

4) Then she says this makes her think what has been an exciting thing in her own therapy is actually going to see her therapist and not knowing what was going to come up what we were going to work with. She remembers her first therapist saying, you know you don’t have to come with an agenda which was a big thing for me.

5) J thinks they do initially come with an agenda because they don’t know what to expect and she thinks part of the question was do we make it known to them what to expect it’s not like we’ve got a formula although we do to formulations in our work but they are for, for our benefit um, but it’s not some thing that we would say well because of the oedipal, because of your ego strength because of this it’s the way you are, so it is unknown for them isn’t it?

6) It is about the relationship with the client which is the whole process, the relationship being in a safe place, containing holding and

Salient features and meanings related to the phenomenon – learning about the unknown

1J) For J the unknown is in practice where the client is and what they are going to do is unknown. Each person has their boundaries but it is the space in the middle where you meet which is the exciting part of the unknown.

2J) She is not sure whether the research put the idea into her mind but at the moment she has noticed how it seems that her clients cannot cope with the unknown and all feel that everyone else is in control of what is happening for them and they are powerless

3J) She gives an example of a client caught in an unknown situation not being able to move forward or back and not knowing where you are which feels powerless

4J) This client reminds her of her own therapy and what was exciting was the not knowing what was going to come up and her first therapists saying that you don’t have to come with an agenda was important

5J) Initially people do come for therapy with an agenda and they don’t know what to expect which raises the question of whether it is for us to tell them what to expect based on our theoretical or any other formula

6J) The whole process of practice is about the relationship as a safe, containing and holding really working with what they bring sort of not being caught up in an agenda
7) J thinks we do not have an agenda because you never know what the client is going to bring, it’s about working with what they bring to the best of her ability and empathising and trying to get inside their skin basically.

8) She has just had an hour with somebody and just can not get into his skin at all which is something of real frustration. He sits there and says you’re right that’s exactly right and she is thinking she is doing too much talking and it must be if he is telling her she is right and its not about being right. How he is perceiving her and giving all the power to her is making her the expert and she is trying to find out what its like for him and is not able to with this one.

9) And the thing is he knows it too and not because she has told him but because he already knows everything about himself so he really doesn’t need anything. He’s telling her he’s learned a lot about himself um but its like a check list he’s got and there’s not that relationship there and she feels she is really letting him down.

10) J would guess that’s part of his worthlessness, he’s always had to assume what people are thinking and then he reacts to that and as a development of his false self he has to work to earn attention, affection, acknowledgement and she thinks that’s what he’s doing instead of just allowing her to accept him as this blob of humanity and quotes her supervisor.

11) For J because everything is unknown and you don’t know what they’re going to walk in with and if its gonna link in with anything that’s happening in your He as well. You might be caught off guard and its being able to put that to one side.

12) On how she has learned about the unknown in her work J says its like the unconscious which is not spoken about but its there but appears in the way that the person speaks or makes a connection or in dreams will come up in that. Its like that Aha moment isn’t it when we make a link and it suddenly something will slot into place where they’ve identified something in themselves that relates to something in the past that they think now and it makes sense of what they have been feeling or how they have been experiencing things or they link their behaviour with a past space rather than working with an agenda.

7J) We do not have an agenda because we do not know what the client is going to bring so the work is about getting inside the client’s skin.

8J) She has just been working with somebody where she cannot do this and it is frustrating. There she is trying to find out what its like for him and although he says she is right she knows she is talking too much because its not about being right but the client is making her the expert.

9J) In any case he already knows what she says because he already knows everything about himself. He doesn’t need anything and knows things instead of having a relationship. J feels she is letting him down.

10J) So instead of allowing her to allow him he finds out and assumes what others are thinking in order to react to them and earn attention, affection and acknowledgment. J sees this as a his worthlessness and false self.

11J) Because there is so much unknown and you do not know what clients are going to walk in with you are going be caught off guard by things linking with your own story which you have to be able to put aside.

12J) J has learned about the unknown as like the unconscious which is not spoken about but appears through the way a person speaks or their dreams. There is that aha moment when we suddenly make a link between ourselves and something in the past which makes sense of how we are feeling or experiencing things pattern oh I always seem to be doing this and perhaps they’ve found out why.
13) For J the unconscious is partly about the unknown because the unconscious is going to be there in the room for both of you so not knowing the unknown is also going to be present for both of you and expectations and anticipations around that unknowing like this interview. What on earth are we going to talk about not knowing and the unknowing and what are you basing it on and where are we starting from. Her anxiety is she is not sure what you're looking for and not sure if she has the answers.

14) On reflecting on the anxiety J thinks this is what we do when we don't know. So if we go back to theory and Bion or Fairburn who has this terrible place of the not knowing and Bowlby and whether mother is going to come back or not and that terrible tension that the child gets into before it relaxes into despair, and she thinks people do despair a lot in the unknown not just from childhood but then again that might just be a pattern that's being repeated.

15) The despair is almost like the unbearableleness the unthinkableness of being in it especially when you've seen that film and that look on that child's face its just horrendous, the one by Bowlby. This child is in hospital and its in this cot with big high sides and its mother comes and goes and it knows the mother is coming back and suddenly the mother doesn't come back so it sort of looks around and then sort of gives up and something breaks inside it and it just goes into despair and sets up all its defences so never to feel like that again.

16) On the question of the therapist's despair J thinks of this as going back to that place where we despair with clients, maybe its something we can go into it with them it's part of it its re experiencing with somebody there to can identify with. She doesn't feel that depth of despair with her clients.

17) J can sometimes identify with the despair in an intake where sometimes part of the question is what has this person come for in counselling now and they are not sure, they just know there is something within them, the despair that they are feeling and yeah maybe how on earth am I going to be of any use to enable this person to move but then that's ok to be there.
18) Just being, being with some one and having all the theory is helpful but its actually being with that person in that space in that time trying to find out what its like for them cause its not known.

19) She always thinks of not knowing as, always pictures it as a void an emptiness and clients often do have that sense of a great gap inside them, of knowing what to fill it with, trying lots of different things. She asks the researcher what she is basing her research on, are you basing it on theory.

20) Another unknown for J is at the end of therapy, lots of therapists don't have a follow up so they're left with the not knowing of what happens to that client and it makes you wonder what kind of people that we are that we all put time and energy into working with some one hopefully seeing some changes but not always and then you know a year maybe two years later they go away and you don't hear you don't know anything about them again unless you or do some research and do a follow up but that's a not knowing that sometimes she finds difficult.

21) But that's not our privilege to know, it seems an unusual kind of work doesn't it in medicine you operate you see and you diagnose and you treat and then you have a follow up and make sure everything is all stitched up and still working.

22) In time limited work sometimes a client will come in and they will say I don't know what to talk about and that space is for them starting to say something or you to reflect back that it seems difficult for you to begin today. She thinks it is just how you feel about that not knowing sometimes one is quite comfortable just to be in that space and sometimes others they are not happy with it as here is not knowing.

23) For J not being aware exactly what the researcher's expectations are and it's a very disappearing subject because we were talking about that in supervision today how we present a person and a face socially and although that's us when we go in the therapy room its still us but its minus a social face but we are still being real just as we are real socially well most of the time, unless you're bull shifting its still us its still the real us but its like you take a mantle off and put on another. So it is difficult because its about what other people think that they need to give what you think that they are expecting from you.
24) On learning about the unknown J says she doesn't know and it might seem strange but we're not omnipotent so we there will be so much that is unknown that we don't know about and this is side tracking completely but she speaks of girlfriend that if we planned to go away she has to speak to everyone that's been there she has to get on the internet and look at every single thing up because she cannot bear the unknown whereas if J has got the dates and the times and knows where she is supposed to be at a certain time she can anticipate the unknown and not be phased by it and not be threatened by it but for her unless she's got all the information about it its threatening um its not safe so some people depending on how their experiences in life from childhood whatever to be somebody ok with not knowing for some and terrified for other people

25) On this terror J says she can only assume its part of past experiences and how we perceive the world. A client last week spent the first ten minutes despairing about the global situation, the environment and after listening for half an hour it was about this internal despair, this conflict this not getting man and nature together out there and it wasn't happening in his life either and he was going off travelling and suddenly he's decided to come into therapy for eight weeks before he goes off cause he wants to know more about himself so maybe it might be seen that the unknown is becoming quite scary for him and maybe he wants to know about this unknown bit of him inside but she doesn't know

26) J thinks theory highlights it there is the unconscious there are things that we just don't understand and there are these experiences you can have where you think I knew that was going to happen or I haven't heard from my friend and she suddenly rings that night, the way that the Freudian slips, the way that we say things. So there's the theory there's our own experience of it and there's our client work as experience of what is happening unconsciously

27) From being in therapy for four years sitting opposite this lady in her sixties and not knowing that she was experiencing the
therapist as her father and relating in a way as
she would have done had the therapist been her
father but um but it was just incredible because
for two years she didn’t know that’s what was
happening she just thought the therapist was a
therapist and she got very bored with it and
would just walk out and shut the door and that
was it and she doesn’t have to go there for
another six or seven days

26) Of course nothing happened that’s why it
took so long and then it was like it lifted and
she would behave with her waiting for the
judgement waiting for the retribution being
found out and of course it never came and that
was incredible, so that was her experience of
working with partly the unconscious and not
realising that was happening

27) Then after about three and a half years
later the therapist lost her temper and shouted
at J who just looked at her and waited til the
end of the session until she could get out and
said I thought I was the one who was bloody
supposed to get angry not you and the next
week they were on a completely different level
and that’s when it changed. She thinks its
because it gave her the voice that until three
and a half years she didn’t have and with the
therapist getting angry she discovered that
actually she doesn’t have to, but is not that
little girl and can speak out and be heard. She
says I had found my voice so that was brilliant

28) J says she filled the space with all sorts of
things and my second lot of therapy was with a
man and the firm boundaries like with the first
therapist the boundaries were so firm so
holding but it was what went in went on in
those firm boundaries that were so different
that there was room to explore to try speak of
some things that wouldn’t normally be spoken
about but knowing that it was safe to in that to
do that. I mean I was conscious of the
boundaries but again its an unconscious thing
that I hadn’t realised that because it was safe
that it allowed me to do all these other things
inside until afterwards and that helped to
develop my practice by allowing me to do
things a little differently with my clients than
just purely psychodynamically so it was a
growing experience

29) Some of the things she did differently were
she would shake hands at the end whereas
before that would have been the ending and
that was it, to disclose a little bit about herself
if she thought it was appropriate if it wasn’t
overwhelming and she thought it was going to
be helpful to the client instead of being this

She didn’t know this was happening at the
time she just thought the therapist was a
therapist, felt bored by it and forgot about it til
the next time

261) Nothing happened which is why it took so
long for it to lift so that she behaved in a way
that expected retribution and the fact it never
came was incredible. This is her experience of
working with the unconscious when she didn’t
know that it was

271) After about three and a half years her
therapist lost her temper and shouted at J who
waited until the end of the session, so she
could get out, to say: “I thought I was the one
who was bloody supposed to get angry.”
Something changed in the relationship and in
her, she found she can speak out and be heard,
she found her voice

281) Another area that J didn’t know was the
boundaries in therapy as firm and holding
which allowed her to fill the space with all
sorts of things and especially in her second lot
of therapy to speak of all kinds of things that
wouldn’t normally be spoken aloud. So whilst
she was conscious of these boundaries she
hadn’t realised until afterwards that they were
what made it safe to speak, that was
unconscious. This learning as a growing
experience helped her develop her practice.

291) In different ways this learning helped her
allow more of herself into the relationship
rather than being a blank screen, it allowed a
safe place to play. So therapy rather, than
training allows a growing and broadening of
that kind of experience.
blank screen, and also allow herself to actually have some fun with a client and allow them to play in that safe place. In training you don’t, they didn’t tell us about that bit so for her being in therapy that was a period of growing and broadening experience but within those boundaries

30) So its like training gives you the base line and it gives you that safety net and then in time you can allow a bit more fluidity in your own practice, although she is not sure how that’s dealing with the not knowing

31) The fluidity is not just its about allowing herself she supposes to be more human and secure in her practice and she has an excellent supervisor so she could be more real and feel that she can take things to her supervisor if she is not happy about what she has done

32) Again therapy helped her to get over the thing that if she is not quite happy about what she has done she doesn’t have to hide it cause she knows she knows she is not going to get baled out

33) J says of practice that you can’t do it with theories, you know a relationship is not based on theory its based on two people connecting in some way and very much in the here and now rather than psychodynamically your linking and identifying patterns in the past where you’ve got the basis of your theory there but then you’ve got how that person is relating there to you in the room what’s being repeated with you

34) J says she is aware that because she is struggling and its like being in an experiential group the first time you go in, what’s supposed to be happening here and nobody tells you whatever supposed to happen and it’s the thing in that group and for her she would do is watch and wouldn’t contribute at all until she figured out and it’s a bit like that here she hasn’t figured out so she is uncomfortable with the not knowing is this what you’re looking for am I just babbling. She has even thought about whether she is wasting the researcher’s time. She is not asking but thinking is this what you’re looking for it all just seems so vague part of her old self is coming back thinking phenomenology and the Europeans who is she referring to I don’t know all about this um so it’s the not knowing what the base line is isn’t it

35) The interview is opening up because there isn’t a boundary around the unknown and its

30J) Training gives you the baseline and a safety net and then in time you can allow a bit more fluidity in your practice

31J) The fluidity is about allowing herself to be more human to feel more real and feel she can take things to supervision

32J) Therapy helped her get over the feeling that she does not have to hide the things she has done

33J) You cannot do therapy as a therapeutic relationship where two people connect, with theories so while you may draw on psychodynamic ideas to help link past patterns you also have the way that person is relating to you, there in the room

34J) The struggling in the interview reminds J of being in an experiential group. At first you go in you don’t know what is supposed to be happening here and no one tells you so to begin with she would watch others, she thought she would wait til she figured it out. Meanwhile the not knowing is uncomfortable and she begins to wonder whether she is wasting time and realises part of her old self is coming back.
difficult to speak and J says in practice there’s a lot of wondering and it seems trying to get a sense of where they are and what they’re feeling what they put on what they’re telling us and how we experience it and then being able to offer it back in some kind of form that will make a difference for them and they may hear and experience something different

37) J then realises she has gone back to Klein here and the idea that if the baby can’t tolerate something it projects it out and the mother accepts it and holds it and gives it back in a more acceptable form so the baby can take it in because if they don’t know if they are projecting a lot of stuff out its because its so uncomfortable for them and a lot of it is probably feelings of the unknown isn’t it and so we can hold it for a little while and then maybe reintroduce it in a different way

38) Its almost like we re experience something with them isn’t it to give it back so that they can experience it in a different way this time. So that’s about the not knowing they’re not knowing what it is that they are giving to us or we are picking up or sensing. Its like counter transference isn’t it so we are experiencing something and can give it back and that’s um I’m wondering how you’re feeling cause of the impact that its put

39) Without the therapists part it would just be circular and she thinks that’s when you see some body that’s been doing something and its been going round and round in their heads for so long and they come and talk to some one and very quickly it becomes clearer to them, it doesn’t have to be a therapist it can be a friend

40) Like you’ve said actually it’s a struggle really isn’t it and she wants to go home and look things up now

So there is a lot of wondering, trying to get a sense or feeling of what the other is saying and feeling by how we experience it so we can offer it back in some form that will allow them to experience something different

37J) J links this with Klein’s ideas of projective identification as unknown feelings causing too much discomfort. This has to be experienced in order to reintroduce it in a different way

38J) This is like re experiencing something and giving it back so it can be experienced differently. That’s about the not knowing the client is not knowing what it is that they are giving to us or we are picking up or sensing. Its like counter transference isn’t it so we are experiencing something and can give it back

39J) The therapists part is to break into the circular experience of something going round and round

40J) This has been a struggle and J wants to go home and look things up not
Kevin

**Discriminated Meaning Units**

1) K is not interested in the occult and sees the unknown as quite a high level idea really and asks questions like how do I live in this world? So he can’t easily separate out himself as a therapist and as a person.

2) What he can say is that he began life by not knowing and then knew and now he doesn’t and that roughly has paralleled his journey with clients in that he didn’t know and then he learnt lots of skills and now he doesn’t know.

3) K speaks of a client he has been seeing seven years on and off with long gaps and he did not know what was happening because they had reached a new place. He didn’t feel at all afraid with her, although he does sometimes when he doesn’t know things. The experience was of her standing at the edge it was almost like Hansel and Gretel standing at the edge of a forest but it was her forest and he just said to her that he didn’t know what she was exploring, this how to live with a knowingness that she has been horribly abused a lot of her life and a knowingness that is down to her uh to do it. Up until this point he has been doing the holding and after a really good bit of supervision realised that he has been holding too long this for her and when he kind of gave it back to her and then they didn’t know what to do with it. But it sort of feels more real than ever together.

4) K reflects back to ten, twenty thirty years ago when he would have said conceptually that of course he doesn’t know but it wouldn’t have been the same it wouldn’t have been would have been like a defence like he is sposed to say but of course he doesn’t know because in a way he doesn’t know anything but it doesn’t feel at all despairing the thing that happened to him eleven or twelve years ago when he’d been a counsellor for about twenty five applying quite strictly psychodynamic principles and was a bit born again. Then he had an awful breakdown, it wasn’t awful in the scheme of things but it was for him and he considered quite seriously suicide and I had to go to a psychiatrist, so there was another sacred cow gone.

**Salient features and meanings related to the phenomenon – learning about the unknown**

1) The unknown asks the question how do I live in this world and this cannot separate out the therapist and the person.

2) K’s journey in life and as a therapist started by not knowing then knowing by learning new skills and then not knowing.

3) The journey is illustrated by the story of a client where like Hansel and Gretel, K stood with her at the edge of the wood. He had realised in supervision that he had not known that he had been holding her story of abuse for too long and is able to acknowledge that how she chooses to live with that knowledge is down to her although neither of them knew what to do.

4) Up to thirty years ago K would have said he didn’t know in a defensive way because he was supposed to say it. Up until twelve years ago, having been a counsellor for twenty five years he was applying strict psychodynamic principles, and then he had a breakdown. It was awful for him and he considered suicide and saw a psychiatrist, so there was another sacred cow gone.
5) When he came back to work the same client kept saying you’re different and he decided to listen to her and it was some thing to do with whilst not saying he knows himself but knows himself better than he ever did but it also knows he doesn’t, he knows if he doesn’t know. So if there was a bomb alert or a bomb in the building he might behave in all sorts of ways that he has no knowledge of until it comes

6) K now believes that its only his personhood that he has to offer in the counselling encounter and also in teaching. He has been in a relationship for twenty two years and is finding out a how much he knows about that person and how little he knows about himself and what kindness or generosity or spite that's going to tumble out. He has resisted making things solid and very predicable so it is a big personal unknown.

7) There are mysterious unknown things like going out and looking out in the sky at night and that is less scary now than it was when he was twenty but it still scares him but it is also something to do with, he feels the need to defend himself a little bit but, it is kind of not being super conscious of ethics not being super conscious of the rules although he has never ever crossed one of those boundaries, you know in quite a long time. It is something to do with going though it with people and then the unknown occurs or the transpersonal or the that moment which is indescribable and there is the ineffable which is also the unknown so he couldn’t really say what happens

8) K tells the story of a young woman who’s husband was killed in a bombing incident. He knew he could never know what it was to be with that kind of pain so he worked all the time knowing that he didn’t know and said that to her too. He was very conscious of her husband’s presence in the room partly because he is not particularly afraid of death and partly because of her sense of his presence. He remembers holding something they found on his body which she gave to him and he held it for a very long time, wanting to not treat it with undue fragility for her sake. There was a stage when she was talking about can she think without disloyalty to him about finding another life and although K is not really a spiritual kind of person he had a very a strong sense of this man with his arm on K’s shoulder saying go on persuade her or tell her or move her on and it felt like something quite important and then almost in the next instance she said (name)

5 K) When he went back to work the same client as above told him he was different and when he heard what she was saying he thought it was that whilst he knows himself better he also knows he doesn’t know and if he doesn’t know. So he can say that if there was a bomb alert he can have no knowledge of how he will behave until it comes

6 K) K has learned that it is the relationship that is important in counselling and teaching and it is there that he learns what he is capable of. A personal unknown is when you do not try to fix the relationship.

7 K) Whilst there are mysterious unknowns such as looking out in the sky at night which scared him when he was twenty there is also the unknown of ethics. So you have to go through something with people and the unknown occurs as the transpersonal in the moment which is indescribable and ineffable.

8 K) A moment when he experienced the unknown was in the presence of a young woman whose husband had died in violent circumstances and something of the client’s sense of her husband’s presence communicated itself to him. He felt that the fact that he is also not particularly afraid of death helped too.
would often pout his arm round his friends. K says he didn’t give that some huge meaning but thought he cannot not tell her, this is isn’t just about congruence so he did and she looked neither surprised nor shocked but I think somewhere that went into the pot. That was a moment when the unknown occurred to him.

9) K goes on to think about his days when he was very religious and used to teach RE looking at that time now it was all about making the unknown known. As a good biblical scholar he took naturally to theology which still informs his work and ability to think. As with many other things it is a source of richness. Yet it’s really a huge defence for him against unknowing. When he left his religious group a few years ago he wrote an article which they didn’t publish where he said that what he was grateful for in religion as he was leaving was all the singing and things like community and realising that you’re not the end of the story that there’s something bigger, life is bigger than you are and that’s almost like being held by that thought but now he does it the opposite way round, instead of wanting to know what I’m held by I sort of know that don’t know.

10) When asked to speak at a funeral K tries to be truthful and usually finds some poetry and its just another bit of life as far as he is concerned. He has been with lots of people when they die cause people sort of trust him cause he is not really scared although he was until he was about forty but he asks if you can feel something celebratory about him as he is talking and that’s about the unknown too. He then wonders about how that affects him with clients which he sees as that availability, not this tosh about easy first sessions where he just takes them there cause what most people want is to know that you’re unafraid really or if you are afraid you can handle it or talk about it or deal with it.

11) K says he doesn’t know anything about the unknown but would imagine, for example he cannot swim either but its something like jumping off the edge of the sea, jumping off the edge of the pool and going to the bottom of the person. He thinks that is all we can do really and although he loves different theories its all tosh really if you take it like a religion. For him it is something like bearing pain with people and even feeling pain with people and its not about getting that suit of armour so that you don’t have to or any of those things so you know

9 K) K sees his involvement with religion as a way of making the unknown known. Whilst his scholarship of theology still informs his work and is a source of richness it is also a huge defence against unknowing. He is however grateful for the singing and the community and especially the recognition that there is something bigger, life is bigger than you. Now though instead of wanting to be held by that and knowing what it is he knows that he doesn’t know.

10 K) K feels people trust him when they are dying because he is not really scared and this is important too with clients and even in first sessions he does not feel the need to make it easy because people need to know that you are unafraid or if you are afraid you can handle it and talk about it.

11 K) K doesn’t know anything about the unknown but then he cannot swim either so it is something like jumping off the edge of the sea or the pool. So although he loves different theories it is all tosh really if you take it like a religion. Instead it is about bearing and feeling pain and not wearing a suit of armour so you don’t have to.
12) K sees another unknown where sometimes he has felt very unsafe telling people things like that because they might have fantasies that he would be boundary less in some ways but in fact it poses more boundaries. This means that in the discourse of counselling that's quite a difficult thing to say especially in this age of regulation and all that, unless we take a risk unless we leap, he thinks we're better off playing golf you know or Karaoke or something

13) For K counselling is about shared danger and about back to the forest, holding hands in the forest like Hansel and Gretel and the only thing that he might have that his client hasn't is usually something about some kind of faith that we can find the other side of the forest too as long as we don't panic. So for K the unknown is a deeply inner place rather than some state of being, some place in space, its something to do with not knowing even what is right

14) K thinks you could know in a situation what we think is right and usually that's a better way to live than not but he doesn't have an inner sense of absolutes and is not very interested in realism so for him being with a client is about making a space in which we can both be as genuinely as possible in order to reach an intersubjective understanding and I don't know of course what that would be.

15) For K when he reaches for the known its usually that he is insecure or pugnacious or if he goes back to his earliest place, which was a place of deep not unknowing, of deep not belonging and of danger and of fear, as he does sometimes then he loses his ability to not know

16) K tells about his biggest failure in a long therapy with a man who was quite badly depressed and it was when he thought he knew and obeyed all these psychodynamic things he just missed the poor bugger. He says that if he'd been equipped with not knowing then he could have helped him instead of deepening his despair by appearing to know which increased the client's appearance of not understanding what he knew

17) He says he was caught in the idea that he was supposed to know but obviously he didn't know it well enough and kept going to supervision and in a sense this got him into being a proxy counsellor and the client into being a proxy client and the whole thing was
lacking authenticity because we were supposed to know

18) K was inexperienced by comparison then and didn't know how not to know because he thought that therapy was about knowing and the kind of leap has been when he stops trying to make the world a better place really, then you can then not know

19) K acknowledges that not knowing is too desperately frightening if you are trying to make the world a better place so at the end of all this time when whatever comes the best that he can manage is to think life is like streaky bacon, you get a bit of each and that kind of helps him to not know

20) The streaky bacon is about good and bad so the reason he wanted to change the world a bit was because he wanted it to be good but if you kind of accept that things you experience are very bad and experiences come and are very good then it can come about without much effort, then you're in a much clearer place to not know so the knowing is to do with gaining power over the world in which you live

21) K's partner is a lawyer and it always fascinates him that can you can know everything theoretically about the law but the whole thing is a construct, it doesn't actually exist. So now he is suspicious of things that you can know. K's suspicion of things you can know has gotten him into trouble at times.

22) There was a time when K mistook being mad for not knowing and he got into very wacky things in terms of sort alternative lifestyles, which he doesn't regret as they were fun but they were a bloody waste of time on the whole and about escaping something else

23) K suggests that you have to position yourself differently if you don't know. So for instance he cares deeply about Northern Ireland and the Middle east but has never known what should happen there. He was with his mother and father when they died and they didn’t know either. Father made it a bit more certain cause he rejoined the Salvation army the day before he died which was good timing even then in the moment of death K didn’t have any sense of anything different.

24) K thinks there was quite a lot of madness in his family and he thinks that madness is an missed the client whereas his unknowing might have been able to meet him authentically.

18 K) Learning about the unknown has come from making the leap of trying to stop making the world a better place.

19 K) If you are trying to make the world a better place not knowing is too frightening

20 K) K recognises he wanted the world to be a good place but accepting all kinds of experiences, good and bad, means that you are in a clearer place to not know rather than know which is trying to gain power over the world

21 K) You can know everything theoretically but this is a construct that doesn't actually exist.

22 K) K also describes how he mistook being mad for not knowing and all the wacky things he got into were fun but on the whole about escaping something else.

23 K) If you don’t know you position yourself differently. There are all kinds of things going on the world he cares about but doesn’t know what should happen and neither does he in the moment of death. When that moment was approaching his father rejoined his religious group.

24 K) There was a lot of madness in his family which he sees as an attempt to know or reach an alternative reality rather than allow
attempt to know and to reach an alternative reality so its not the same as unknowing although he did confuse unknowing with madness

25) K also says he didn't know how to distinguish between the people who learned humility and the people who’d got wild schemes so he was interested in some extreme ideas he thought they had to be right and he had to be wrong so supposing they were right. It can only have been in the last fifteen years that he has really not been interested in people who know

26) K speaks of a client who plays at the idea of madness in order it seems to escape from whatever his reality is at that moment so he prefers to think of himself as paranoid or delusional than to learn to face whatever has got to be faced and fair enough. This is compared with his growing up with quite a lot of madness and the confusion of how you could tell the difference between madness and unknowing.

27) K thinks that unknowing is quite a different state because madness is usually based on some sort of certainty he says all of those things seem to be about his not facing what is so that he will make a temporary faith in compulsive religion or compulsive figures that haunt him.

28) K also thinks that the ability to cope with the unknowing goes with his increasing capacity to look an ass and not mind too much. He does mind but rarely does it now hurt to the core so there may be a connection between narcissism to me you know and whether there is a connection of narcissism and the ability to not know

29) On how he has learned K uses what he calls technical language, hence he speaks of a change in ontology and how we’ve changed from a very theocratic ontology to one which is still not kind of intellectual but is an existential idea of capacity for wonder which he has always had and which he thinks is important in not knowing

30) As a reasonably honest person K also says that when an experience comes along he has to tussle with it, its not a choice, until he has understood. He tells the testament story, which is a myth in the true sense of the word, of Jacob wrestling with the angel until dawn and he wrestles with him until the angel gives

unknowing which he confused unknowing with madness

25 K) Part of his learning about this has come from a time when he couldn’t tell distinguish between people who had learned humility and people with wild schemes. If these latter people were right then he must be wrong and only in the last fifteen years has he not been interested in people who know.

26 K) People can play at being mad too in order to escape their reality preferring to think of themselves as paranoid or delusional rather than face what has to be faced. Another madness was in his growing up in madness and confusion where you could not tell the difference between madness and unknowing.

27 K) Unknowing is different from madness which is usually based on some kind of certainty so for him this meant making a temporary and compulsive faith

28 K) Learning to cope with unknowing goes with an increasing capacity to look an ass and not mind too much in the sense of hurting to the core. He thinks there may be a connection here with his narcissism and the ability to not know.

29 K) He has learned these things in technical terms from a change in ontology which is not intellectual but to do with his own being and the capacity to wonder

30 K) He has to tussle with experiences in order to understand. Like the story of Jacob wrestling with the angel until the angel gives him his name. The name represents power.
him his name because the Hebrew belief is when you have the name you have the power.

31) For K it is when things that happen such as the pain of my childhood, the compulsive religion, the coming out of the pain of divorce and most of all leaving his children and he has to know what those things are to him and in a converse way it doesn't make sense that then takes me to the unknown if he left them in abeyance they'd be objects floating like they are real.

32) K describes how things that are said can seem real to one person but not another and he knows they are and real he responds to them. He gets hurt, picks a fight, shouts but he also knows that they're symbols at some level and just by the way he is made he has to go through those windows and see the dark outside so to speak.

33) So K came to know partly through a degree of intellectual luck in that he had the chance to see the discrepancies between theology and sociology and education and English and psychology and also because he is good at taking up opportunities.

34) Also pain leads you somewhere else which might be better might be worse and he has always been a very committed person and he has found the edges of what commitment can give you because if you love some one too much then you destroy that which you love.

35) K explains that in a talk he gave about the mature personality he remembers being very challenging to some people there about doing things to the edge, like Melanie Klein who says go there go to your hatred go to your extremes and then you find something else which is not love which is acceptance.

36) K says he could say that he has been on lots of courses and things but they didn't touch me compared with having a breakdown or falling in love or weeping over his children. He doesn't welcome do as an experience for them or for him but he also knows its important. Plato as having talked about the examined life cannot be a teacher unless somehow you are able to engage with it.

37) He says the fact that he had a mythology that was important like suffering has some hidden gift which he supposes is what crucifixion is all about. A mythology is important because it doesn't mean you go

31 K) His tussles have been around the pain of his childhood, compulsive religion, coming out of a divorce and leaving his children. Knowing what these experiences are to him, as opposed to leaving them floating, conversely takes him to the unknown.

32 K) Things that are said can seem real to one person and not another and then he responds to them as if they are real rather than symbols.

33 K) Partly through intellectual luck and the ability to take up opportunities he began to see all kinds of discrepancies as between: theology and sociology and education and English and psychology.

34 K) His own personal journey has been painful leading him to the edges of commitment where he discovered that if you love someone too much then you destroy that which you love.

35 K) You have to go to the edge, to your extremes of hatred too and then you find something else, not love, but acceptance.

36 K) Plato spoke of the examined life which cannot be the teacher unless you are able to engage with it. Courses didn't touch him in the way that the experiences of life have such as having a breakdown or falling in love or weeping over his children.

37 K) For K we need a mythology such as a belief that suffering has some hidden gift which means that you then cannot avoid things.
round all you life avoiding things that might speak to you from the unknown and the worst kind of life for would not be a short life but one where he lived drugged and for that reason he watches almost no television compared with many people because it reminds him the (noise outside) and he hates to feel drugged.

38) K speaks of his mythology as being about the way we live as if things are real and it is important to engage with our experience but he has no sense of things as solid and if you look at time and mortality it is impossible at one level to take all this stuff including one's PhD really seriously cause it actually will not matter and it does matter.

39) K believes that there is this kind of ether that we live in and the way that we get the most of living is by engaging but that we engage differently if we know what we don't know. The difference is about dogmatism to begin with and not being so inclined to build superstructures out of some things you've experienced as good or true or needed.

40) K explains how its about laughing at yourself more. Like when he got into an awful state because his email wouldn't work and he'd rung up the email people and they'd said he hadn't paid and he couldn't remember his password and he felt the pressure building and then for a split second he did have a sense of his own ridiculousness. Although it didn't all get better something was different. There is sometimes that part of him that actually gets to believe that what he is concerned about is terribly important and something depends on it and there is just that smidgeon of a chance that he might laugh at himself or see it differently which changes the whole thing.

41) For K this makes a difference when he is with another person because he can at times be more generous or love a bit better. He loves his clients and sometimes hates them too and sometimes would rather be anywhere than with them but in some wildly important way that's got to do with not knowing cause he is freer towards them than if they're not conforming to my plans.

that speak to you from the unknown. The worst kind of life would be to remain drugged.

38 K) K's mythology is that we live life as if things are real but he has no sense of things as solid. If you look at time and mortality it is impossible to take all this stuff seriously, such as doing a PhD, and yet it does matter.

39 K) The way we get the most out of living is by engaging which we do differently if we know what we don't know. This difference is to do with not being dogmatic or building superstructures out of what you experience whether, good, bad or needed.

40 K) If one can catch a glimpse of one's own ridiculousness in what we are concerned with we might laugh at ourselves and see it differently which changes us.

41 K) The difference this makes is then how he is with another person because then he can be more generous and love and hate. In a wildly important way this is to do with not knowing because then he is freer towards the other and they are not conforming to his plans.
1) A says that it's immediately problematic because if it's unknown I can't possibly have learnt it and nor can I understand it. It's a bit philosophical isn't it.

2) A weird thing that A thought of was Carlos Casteneda who says that you have to tell the difference between the unknown and the unknowable which makes it even more scary in a way so for a start he says he is assuming that your concern with the unknown is within the area of practicing as a psychotherapist which he relates to how you deal with the unknown in terms of working effectively with a patient no matter what may come in from the outside come into the area of so basically the patient is the patient isn't he.

3) A is very much concerned with that with Wilfred B... as obviously a lot of my colleagues are who is he is pretty strong on the unknown which is that it evolves into K. The power of understanding and thought or whatever he means by K or whatever we make of it doesn't reach back into the unknown but that the unknown emerges into it which is a mystical idea but also a phenomenological one because what he means is that we may come to know the unknown but we will only know it in the terms of which we are capable of constructing it so its always going to be an approximation and.

4) For A that's the challenge of life - to know the unknown at least it's a sophisticated challenge in life quite apart from getting rich or whatever so I suppose for me its in a way it's a matter of pride to say well yes of course I'm open to the unknown you know I have a revolution every day really but it you see....

5) A gets confronted with the fact that he didn't know something with patients and sometimes there is a point at which he finally understands something that he thought he understood which is a bit shocking. He gets this in supervision as well all the time when his supervisor says, having looked his interpretation "but how did you know that" and he says its because he cannot forget memory and desire and his colleagues find it hard too. He realises that he understands what his patients say in terms of what he already knows know about them and in terms of the

Salient features and meanings related to the phenomenon - learning about the unknown

1A) A immediately recognises that the question is problematic because the unknown cannot be learned or understood, so he sees the question as philosophical.

2) A) You have to tell the difference between the unknown and the unknowable which in psychotherapy is to do with working effectively with a patient and what they bring which is unknown.

3) A) He is interested in Bion's idea of K and the idea that we do not reach back into the unknown so much as the unknown emerges into it. This is seen as a mystical idea and also phenomenological in that we will only come to know the unknown in the way we are capable of constructing it which will always be an approximation.

4) A) It's a challenge in life to know the unknown and A feels that it can be a matter of pride that he can say he is open to the unknown but the reality is different.

5) A) And yet being confronted with the realisation that something he thought he understood still has more to it is shocking. An example of this is in supervision when he is asked how he knows something and he realises he cannot forget memory and desire so he continues to understand his patients by what he already understands from what he already knows.
6) This has been a long struggle to push back at the idea that he is supposed to understand what the patient means, to push back to the idea that actually he is supposed to ask the patient what he means which has been very helpful but is quite an uncomfortable process.

7) A reflects on the way the whole of his career has been uncomfortable and that probably what shocked me has been how he was divorced about fifteen years ago and met somebody new which turned his life upside down and a result of that found himself back in supervision and in psychoanalysis and began to see that when he first qualified he had felt very unconfident but what he had actually done was to decide he had an instinctive understanding of psychoanalytic technique and that he knew what to do with patients.

8) A didn’t maintain that view all through training even though he says he has been extremely tolerant of the conviction of his teachers that they have something to teach him and even though what he found exciting about training was that he learned a whole lot of new theory that he had no idea existed but in spite that he didn’t know he didn’t know. He still believed he had this incredibly intuitive gift and it wasn’t until fifteen years ago that I really thought really know how much...

9) A has done quite well as a psychotherapist but found it was very shocking to discover how much more he could learn but learning new theory is not the unknown and that you need new knowledge which he thinks is not the unknown although there is a difference between what you didn’t know and what you didn’t know you didn’t know.

10) In doing sciences at school what he learned is as surprising as what he learned when he trained as a psychotherapist. When he started doing biology at university which he didn’t do for very long he discovered that university courses didn’t have so much of that and again with the same sort of arrogance there wasn’t a lot more that was revolutionary after A level it seemed to him that in the universities we simply went more deeply into the same things.

11) In psychotherapy training trainees will complain we do the same things over again that often years are repetitive but of course actually he quite likes that from a teacher’s immediate context.

6 A) It has been a long struggle to push at the idea that he is supposed to understand and instead ask the patient what he means. This is helpful but also uncomfortable.

7 A) The whole of his career has been uncomfortable but it was his divorce that shocked him, turned his life upside down and brought him back to the supervision and psychoanalysis where he realised he had hidden his lack of confidence behind his belief that he had an instinctive understanding of what to do.

8 A) He didn’t realise the above all through training and tolerated his teachers’ views that they had something to teach him and he found learning about theory exciting that he had no idea but he still didn’t know he didn’t know. He kept sustaining the idea that he had an intuitive gift until his divorce.

9 A) Despite his success as a psychotherapist it was a shock to discover that he could learn a lot more through new knowledge which he does not see as the unknown but perhaps the difference between what you didn’t know and what you didn’t know you didn’t know.

10 A) He found learning about science at school and university surprising and psychotherapy too but they were repetitive there was not a revolutionary kind of learning so he kept learning with the same sort of arrogance.

11 A) As a teacher he has come to enjoy the repetition and the way you find the unknown lurking in the known by looking at clinical experience and then re looking at a theme you already know.

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point of view. When we return to a theme you bring back to it experience clinical experience and everything else that you've learnt and when you look at it again you find much more in it there's an unknown lurking inside a known and A thinks the real trouble is really is the inner world of the patient isn't it

12) As a psychology student A learned, especially through Ruth Benedict, and the anthropologists about the idea of how you when you meet up with a problem or an alien culture that you've really got to do something very strange indeed in order to understand it. Obviously you need to do the same thing with a patient in psychotherapy who is a culture of one. You have to have their world view but in order to have their world view you have to understand them but where do you start except perhaps where an infant starts which sounds very worthy and philosophical in principal but in practice we don't like it that the idea with a patient who you're supposed to be the psychotherapist you're supposed to understand.

13) A remembers being in a psychotherapeutic group with a quite charismatic leader very confident rather aggressive arrogant man who he admires tremendously but he noticed as a psychology student in the group that he could see a lot of stuff that the facilitator couldn't and he was very perceptive. A got the idea that if you've got to lead the group you've got to try and keep in touch with everybody you are going to miss things and if you are free to sit in the group and do pretty much what you like as he was then you're attention can hover where it likes and pick and you are going to pick up stuff with the freedom to pick and choose that he doesn't have.

14) A returns to the idea of the patient which is what really counts and think of how many sessions begin with a very clueless feeling and with that a very inadequate feeling that he is supposed to understand and he doesn't. He doesn't take very naturally to the psychoanalytic view and much prefers the sort of scientific or pseudoscientific view of standing outside of something and observing it and he can pick up quite a lot from observation and inference that is actually counterproductive with a patient to be distracted by what they're talking about.

15 sm2) As the patient he knows what he means by what he says but of course his psychotherapist knows the meaning of what he says doesn't

12 A) As a psychology student A learned about the importance of cultural difference and now as a psychotherapist you have to learn the patient's world view and you have to start as an infant would by not understanding and we do not like this idea because the psychotherapist is supposed to understand.

13 A) Through an experience in a group with a charismatic leader A learned that he could see a lot of things the facilitator could not even though he was very perceptive, because A was free to do pretty much what he liked and his attention could hover where it liked and pick up things the facilitator couldn't because he had to keep in touch with everybody.

14 A) What really counts is beginning a session feeling clueless, which leaves him feeling inadequate because he is supposed to understand and doesn't. This is because he naturally prefers the scientific or pseudoscientific view of standing outside and observing. But in psychoanalysis it is counter productive to be distracted by what the patient is talking about.

15 A) He also questions the psychoanalytic view where the therapist can seem to know better than the patient what the patient is really saying and when instead of picking matter as it means something to him quite separately and so is that you know the
unknown. He says “if I know what it means what you’re saying then nevermind what you mean by what you’re saying I know better than you I know what you really mean” A questions whether he as the therapist is really picking up the unknown or is he just totalising the patient into his own view of things – so if we’re really dealing with the unknown how the hell do you know

16) A compares a patient who complained after three or four years of treatment that she had discovered that in the kind of psychotherapy she was doing you were supposed to free associate and she complained that he had never told her this which was true because she started talking and as nothing was broke he didn’t try and fix it with another working class patient, mentioning rules in psychoanalytic psychotherapy where people, for example working class people are supposed to be incapable of psychoanalytic therapy, who he has only very recently talked to about free association at all. This patient doesn’t know psychoanalytic words for things but if I take up what he says in terms of an idea about him he picks up very quickly on that idea not in the sense that he defines intellectually but in the sense that he associates unerringly in the area I’m talking about. He questions whether that patient knows what he means and he would say that he did but we’re much more concerned by whether I know what he means

17) In speaking of free association A is reminded of one of the simpler things that were unknown to him and remembers how patients would lay out stuff in the sense that they would say things that seemed to them to be free association but would seem to me to be parts of a puzzle that fitted together so obviously that they must know perfectly well what the meaning was and he had the idea that they were feeding him with easy material to reassure him as a psychotherapist which was after all what he wanted to be reassured by material that made sense to him, why he thought they thought he needed it he doesn’t know.

18) A says that if he couldn’t make sense that is his fear after all patients will say this is all meaningless and he’ll say well then something has destroyed the meaning of it but his fear is that he could never make meaning of it in the first place and it still is or that he’ll make the wrong meaning of it which he does up the unknown (as unconscious) he could just be totalising the patient into his own world view. If we are dealing with the unknown how the hell do you know whether it’s the unknown.

16 A) A compares a patient who wanted to know about free association even though she was talking freely to a patient who he did speak about free association to and who could associate even though he didn’t know the theoretical words for it. Instead of speaking intellectually the patient just did it which A links with the kind of rules that working class people cannot do psychoanalysis as being about their lack of the right language. The problem here is that therapists are more concerned by whether they know than whether the patient knows what he means.

17 A) The idea of free association helps A to identify something that was unknown to him as his assumption that patients know perfectly well, as they freely associate, what they as it seems so obvious to him how different associations fit together, so they are just feeding him because they are trying to reassure him

18 A) Even though A believes that if something is meaningless it is because meaning has been destroyed he realises he is afraid that he couldn’t make the meaning or will make the wrong meaning, as he does sometimes.

19) For A you need the doubt of it which may be in a persecutory way his pathology that only
the fear would keep him from being arrogant a
measure of which is normal because its
comfortable but it's the practitioners that don't
worry about it that we worry about. So he
thinks of doubt as an insurance policy. I think
about trainees then the trainees who are
terrribly anxious about failing and their work
being and almost inevitably those are the
trainees that you feel confident about as
colleagues vice versa those trainees who are
very confident and seem omnipotent are
unteachable. It would be nice to be dubious of
one's understanding all the time without ever
having to be anxious about it

20) A says of his arrogance that it was more
like the idea that he found it didn't bother him
at all to discover all these things he didn't
know but he had to learn them and learning
about things he didn't know didn't make him
feel ignorant but nor did it suggest to him that
since there was all this theory he didn't know
or why he didn't need to learn about technique
so in spite of the fact that he was finding it
very exciting to learn so much he still went
right on thinking he knew it all already. He
acknowledges this is contradictory. His
arrogance is completely immune to the
evidence of his ignorance which is comfortable
in a way cause it meant that learning things
intellectually was reasonably painless cause it
never challenged his omniscience

21) However for A this arrogance meant he
missed out on a lot of the supervision and
analysis that he should have had in the middle
of his career which leaves him in analysis at
the age of sixty wishing that he'd done more of
it sooner. He thinks that the theme of the
unknown has a lot to do with this that if he'd
been more tolerant of not knowing things he'd
have learned more

22) A speaks of how his divorce shook him up
and how a lot of people's training shakes them
up although he doesn't think his did because
he was so anxious about training that he kept
up a very manic attitude and just kept his head
down and went for it but then he had been
shaken up a lot before he trained anyway
although most of his colleagues had too

20) On wondering about the meaning of being
shaken up A says it is a revolution, its when
the unknown bites you in the leg and means an
incursion of the unknown but it means that you
come to know it in a way which is painful and
disruptive
19 A) The fear is what stops you being
arrogant which is both normal and pathological.

21 A) If A had learned to be more tolerant of
not knowing he would have been less arrogant,
learned more and been more open to
supervision and therapy rather than having to
catch up now, later in his career

22 A) His divorce shook him up in a way his
training didn't in the way it does for others.
He was able to hide his anxiety and the fact the
he was already shaken up before his training.

23 A) Being shaken up means a revolution
when the unknown bites you in the leg so it is
painful and disruptive
24) Our reaction to the unknown is a matter of resistance so if he were a Buddhist he thinks of the unknown as surrounding us and of reality emptying out of existence and therefore capable of any moment at delivering something new. He thinks of the spiritual guide as someone who has given up all resistance to that who lives very comfortably joyously even in the assumption that everything he knows is provisional and the next thing that happens would be expected to contradict that. But most of us live our lives on the assumption that we understand everything.

24 A) We resist the unknown which surrounds us but Buddhists are able to empty themselves out of existence and capable of something new because they have given up resistance and are comfortable in the assumption that knowing is provisional and contradictory.

25) A speaks of his role as a teacher and being open about what the work is like and how they assess students and what are the criteria for qualification. He says that the most important criterion is probably whether it is safe to let this person out as a qualified psychotherapist and what he means by safe is whether they will go on learning or having escaped our clutches will they make sure that they never ever learn anything again basically because they're arrogant. So while they do look for some kind of clinical ability in trainees work as well they are much more concerned with the ability to learn because you don't learn much from a training anyway you know you you've got to do a training you must learn something. You know trainees complain that it's much too long it's much too demanding and we think well if its so demanding why did we have to learn so much after we qualified.

25 A) As a teacher A works with colleagues who are open to what the work is like so that assessment of safe practice becomes a question of whether students can go on learning after training rather than making sure they never learn anything again because training is only the beginning of learning.

26) A remembers when experienced therapists said to him that its only really when you've done ten years experience after qualifying that you begin to have any idea what this is about and after ten years he didn't really have much idea what it was about. It takes this long because we hate the way it makes us feel insecure and learning is in Bion where he says learning is catastrophic and that if you learn something you enter a new world which means that you become a new person which means that the old person dies.

26 A) A remembers his own experience when he was told that its only when you have had ten years experience after qualifying that you have any idea what this is about but even then he still didn't. As Bion says it takes this long because learning is catastrophic and if you learn something you enter a new world which means that you become a new person which means that the old person dies.

27) He has learned from a patient, who is desperate for an identity because she is terribly insecure, how important it is to be able to identify with someone or something. So learning is against identification and you learn something you unidentify and every time you drop your identity you feel like you're sort of crossing a chasm.

27 A) He relates this to a patient and the terrible insecurity of not having something to identify with and this is the kind of learning he means which is against identification and when you unidentify it feels like crossing a chasm.
28) Its half normal and half pathological in that its normal to hate being confronted with the fact that you don’t know things there’s a pathology which is probably a narcissistic crisis. If I am not the person I think I am then I am Nobody. So rather than being in the exciting business of what I am going to become next narcissism defends against it and the pathological aspect is insecurity and A recognises he tried to hide this.

29) The last thing that A wanted to say was the thing that is really still making me think about the unknown is Bion’s idea of O which means a lot to him because he finds it a really shocking thing in psychoanalysis, the O makes the unknown seem like a sort sea surrounding us as though we are living in a capsule the sea of the unknown.

30) This was a revolutionary idea to introduce into psychoanalysis although the collective unconscious has that potential in the sense that its not a personal unconscious like Freud’s. This idea that the unknown arises in us intuitively and that we construct it is revolutionary in psychoanalysis.

31) A has only ever seen these ideas in Buddhism never thought he would see it in psychoanalysis. He says he is tremendously encouraged that psychoanalysis should be capable of allowing such an infant to live.

32) He sees it as utterly mystical the idea that we can come to know something not through the senses or through the power of reason whatever you call it mental power is mystical revolutionary, anti scientific that’s to say anti materialist and though exciting very attractive. He likes the idea of disruptive ideas but its implications are pretty strange.

33) He went into this as a student of psychology really wanting to understand consciousness and sort of believing that maybe consciousness was a biological function that could be explained in terms of physics and chemistry and information processing and the idea of O turns that on its head really and introduces the idea that the kind of science that understands consciousness might not be anything like science as we know it which is really physics or chemistry that you’d have to have something that isn’t either physics or chemistry.

34) He says that while on the one hand patient’s say you feel fear you feel anxiety you feel excitement you feel love you have
emotional experiences but you don't really believe they're real you only believe that material objects are real and I say actually it's the other way round the only thing you know the reality of is your own emotion you know you can feel that alright because it hurts usually sometimes whereas scientific knowledge isn't certain at all its provisional

35) For A the idea that consciousness is something quite different to physics and chemistry isn't simply that we don't know enough but that if you knew enough physics and chemistry it wouldn't look like that anymore in common parlance um it would be unscientific which I think is untrue because of course as soon as you know something in a tested out way it is science um but as I say its a pretty very serious implication that knowledge come to us not through information processing but something for want of better word we call intuition which is pushing us towards something spiritual or religious. There isn't really much more you can say about it is there?

36) There isn't really much more you can say about it is there because I don't know any more about it

37) But then no he is sure we can find out more about consciousness is unknowable. In fact it is terribly dangerous to say that anything is unknowable. It would be crazy to say that consciousness is of such a strange nature that human minds could never understand it, never, though he notices we haven’t found out anything at all about what happens after death so we don't even know whether or not we are ever going to know anything but whoever knew what he was going to know anyway

35 A) If you really knew enough physics and chemistry consciousness wouldn't look scientific it would be unscientific but of course as soon as you know it in a tested out way it becomes scientific. But knowledge comes to us not through information processing but through intuition which pushes us towards the spiritual or religious and there is not much more that can be said.

36 A) He has reached the limit of what he knows.

37 A) But he thinks we can find out more about consciousness. It would be crazy to say that consciousness is so strange that we could never understand it. But then we have never found out what happens after death. So we don't even know whether or not we are ever going to know anything but whoever knew what he was going to know anyway
Jan

**Discriminated Meaning Units**

1) How J has learned about it well two things strike her it isn’t something that she has been able to learn but it is something she has been able to read about and also experience what she thinks the experience of the unknown has been to her.

2) Interestingly enough a couple of weeks ago or more than that a few weeks ago she said to her therapist that she is so fucking bored with what she brings, everyday things relationships with her children and parents. She is just so bored, not bored she just doesn’t seem to have the need to take it like she used to. She thinks something is shifting for her in that she is sort of ok with her, with the struggle and the anxiety you know which can be horrible and very very real but its like ok. So she’s feeling anxious and unhappy or sad or struggling or whatever but doesn’t have this great desire to talk about it like she used to and just wonders whether that is opening up something else, possibly the unknown or more of the unknown but then you get into the question of what is unknown what do we mean by unknowing or unknown.

3) And she thinks there are two things that come up. One where you put your beliefs into thinking and things like behind and you can be open to what you don’t know but then of course then its about as soon as you get into well you do know you get into that’s getting into the thinking and believing bit.

4) But for her another bit of the unknown that seems to be around for is um difficult to speak about to find words but its something about when nothing else there’s no thinking, no understanding there’s no desire to it reaches part of her that is just there which is she supposes Rogers would say the core self. And there’s a lot of talk about whether its spiritual or mystic all that kind of stuff and for her it is in some kind of way

5) J has experienced it with clients she has to say not very often but when she has experienced it with a client its been fleeting that it seems to be a very short period of time that being in that place whatever you call it is very short but then what comes out of it seems very a deeper understanding a closeness with the other an ability to go somewhere that

**Salient features and meanings related to the phenomenon – learning about the unknown**

1) The unknown hasn’t been something J has learned about but something she has been able to read about and experience

2) J thinks something is shifting in her own therapy, where she is feeling that she doesn’t need to take the everyday things she used to. While she recognises her struggle and her feelings of anxiety, unhappiness or sadness around those things she doesn’t have the desire to talk about them and thinks something else possibly the unknown is opening up.

3) There is a kind of paradox in that if you put your beliefs and thinking behind you can be open to what you don’t know but as soon as you think about that you get into thinking and believing.

4) When there is nothing as in no thinking, no understanding, no desire to she is reached in a spiritual or mystic way that Rogers might call the core self but is difficult to put into words.

5) J has experienced this spiritual, mystic place with clients but it is fleeting. It is a place of deeper understanding and closeness and yet doesn’t have to be about understanding.
its just there doesn't have to be about understanding but there again it is.

6) Out of it comes some sort of understanding but that very short space of time in her experience is extremely powerful and for her gives her hope that there's something else rather than the anxiety of understanding things and knowledge and all the rest of it. That actually that can all fuck off and actually there's something else.

7) And for her at the moment its like in therapy she just wants to go there and is not sure that you can just go there actually because you don't know where you are going and if you planned where you were going it upsets that special unique moment and how do you get there?

8) I give the example of when she goes up on the cliffs head walking the dog and goes right up to the top there and some people would call it a religious moment being in touch with god but she is not a believer in god but she is part of something that is just there and its just wonderful just to be there and the thinking and the struggle and the pain or whatever it is that might be going on in daily life just isn't there, well it is but its not for that moment and its something to do with getting in touch with nature or whatever it is but its freeing, extremely freeing.

9) Of course she wants more of it and when it comes to learning about it its something about for moving away from theory and perhaps reading more philosophy and reading more about this. She is not sure whether that's true or not but for her its something other than theory you know Freud and Rogers its just something different. She knows they touch on it and they talk about the unconscious but its even more that the unconscious because the unconscious you can bring it into the known and that suggests there's something in the unconscious that you bring into the known whereas this doesn't seem to be the same as that for her it's something different.

10) That quite excites her really that she can let go of something let go of the theory, thinking um you know the struggle that goes on sometimes with a client it just seems to be freeing up in her and also in her work. Its almost like, but its not, that she is becoming more confident in herself to free herself up with the relationship with the other.
Its not anything that she does and she can't honestly say that she is doing anything its just starting to emerge. Of course the temptation is to make it happen and to read about it and have knowledge about it so that you can make it happen but that's her thing to go and learn about it but especially about this you can't, well you can and things that I've never really been involved in before like poetry or music. She has always been involved in music that's the thing the kind of unknowing is going to a place and she listens to music and where everything else disappears and its just that moment of when something, its not bringing up memories its not doing anything like that, its just so powerful and freeing.

What also comes up for her is the ultimate unknowing which is what happens when you die and how people in all sorts of ways not just with death but with freedom and everything else kind of come up with ways of avoiding what for her could be the reality is that there is nothing, or there could be something.

She doesn't kind of think she is somebody coming up with a belief or a faith. She used to think because she didn't have a belief or a faith that she was lacking something and tried really really hard to believe in god at one stage because she thought "well if I have a belief about something then I'll be ok" and that's kind of gone and she doesn't feel the need anymore. When she first came into counselling it was about finding a belief finding something that worked and of course that's all in there really.

Learning theory for her was finding answers and of course we turn to theory to help us in understanding what's going on and what the possibilities are here and all the rest of it she thinks she learns in a different way.

The temptation is to read about, have knowledge of so that you can make this kind of experience happen but when it does it is not anything she has done. And yet listening to poetry or music takes you to that unknowing place which is powerful and freeing.

The ultimate unknowing is what happens when you die and as with freedom people come up with ways of avoiding the reality that there is nothing, or something.

She used to think that because she did not have a faith that she was lacking something and so she tried to have a belief in god because then she would be ok. Now she doesn't have that kind of belief although coming into counselling was about finding a belief.

It brings up loneliness as well in that there's two things, there's nothing that's going to make her feel good all the time or solve or just make her life perfect and she has just got to the point where she is more ok with the imperfections the struggle but then that's always tested isn't it? just when you think you're ok with it something happens then you get trapped in that awfulness and struggle bit and its horrible. That's enabled her to sit with clients and their own struggles because she can sit with her own struggles but also know how difficult that is to have to be in that and the things that we do to get out of it

Learning theory is helpful in understanding what is happening but she learns about the unknown differently, in a way that opens things up maybe like the theatre, poems, reading such as autobiographies where you
and that is kind of opening up things like and
she doesn’t know because she hasn’t really
started exploring it, but things like theatre,
poems, reading different material that’s maybe
even autobiographies of people, just to be able
to read something like that without having to
understand it but just accept that’s what their
lives were like.

16) She thinks in a way its taking the blinkers
off because you can get so blinkered in this
work, you’ve got the theory there and you
have a client and they say this and that and
you’ve got this history and you kind of fit
them into this theory. It doesn’t really matter
which one you choose really cause you can
always fit it to some theory and she is not sure
she wants to. She is not sure whether that
closes you down somehow and just has this
feeling that she want to take the blinkers off
really and be and accepting differences

17) Something of the person’s differences to
me and different to anybody and just unique
and not having to fit them into some theory
cause she thinks and has always thought that
funny how we come down to basics again how
toory can stop something

18) Stop hearing, stop seeing, stop really
hearing what they’re saying and that’s about
who they are and its not about change always.
and it sounds so juvenile sort of simplistic but
its not its something really deep and she can’t
find the words to describe it.

19) Maybe its something to do with love
something very pure and simple something
that doesn’t have to be complicated or
theorised, its just very simple and its such a
simple place to be just being and thinking
interrupts it and she can feel that and that’s the
difficulty with its not difficult, choosing words
is so easy and yet why do we always have to
explain it find words to describe it.

20) What’s come to mind is something this
religious bloke said on the radio, he really
irritates her and he said something to this
Jamaican tenor about his faith and Christianity
and this interviewer said something about how
do you help the less able or the weaker people
in life and the tenor in his response told the
interviewer that he was talking a load of crap
and he said well of course you don’t treat
people any differently and you don’t treat them
as weak people. She doesn’t know why that
has just come up now but it has made her feel
really angry that people treat people in certain
ways and categorise them into you know weak

don’t have to understand just accept what their
lives were like

16) J wonders whether working with the
client and their history and linking that to
theory, and any theory can be made to fit,
leaves you blinkered and closed down whereas
she wants to take the blinkers off

17) Taking the blinkers off means being and
accepting the person as different to her and
different to anybody, as unique, which comes
down to basics. Theory can stop something

18) Theory can stop you really hearing and
seeing what the other person is saying and who
they are which is not always about change.
This may sound simplistic but it is really deep
and words cannot describe it.

19) This is to do with love, pure and simple
not complicated or theorised, being rather than
doing yet we always want to find words which
interrupt it

20) J gives the example of a religious bloke
on the radio talking to Jamaican tenor about
his faith. The interviewer asked how do you
help the weaker people in life and the tenor
said of course you don’t treat people any
differently as weak people. What made J
angry about this was the way people categorise
others and then treat them. In her own
experience of therapy the simple act of being
with some one is empowering
labels such as unintelligent and then treat them in different ways and if only we could just be with people and, her experience in therapy is, how empowering that is just that simple act of being with somebody who can be with you

21) The power of that is enormous and she is not sure how many therapists have that ability to do that, and get caught up and she has done that too, caught up trying to change things for the client kind of get them to see things all that kind of stuff instead of actually just being with that person and she even sometimes forgets the power of that, not so much now, by getting caught up in their anxiety and their struggle and solve it for them

22) Because that’s what you go into it that’s what she went into it first for one of the reasons was to help other people and ended up helping her, ten years on

23) In reflecting back on ten years it takes courage to go on and will continue to go on and when it gets tough you want not do it any more, lets not go there really and that’s the time when you really have to dig my heels in and say no what this about and look at something else that’s going on

24) J is used to that now and when it happens it's still strong but its not so overwhelming its different cause she has been there before although she hasn’t been there before because it hasn’t come up before.

25) It is an ongoing learning process which sounds very clichéd but there might be something in the cliché well there is isn’t there and there are quite a few clichés that go along in this kind of work but they’re there and they do have meaning and not to be brushed off as unimportant because it is important its not just a cliché its something important its a cliché attached to something that is very real and often very important that’s going on

26) it’s the same with clients and they say things that well off the top of their heads or just sort of throw in well its either do you pick it up there and then or do you just sort of put it away somewhere but the changing is difficult but the staying there is shitty as well and she has had clients and they've seen that and decided not to

27) She says she doesn’t know in the room and in the early days it was like she did know and she would go full on and pick up on things like that immediately whereas now she is much

21) J) J feels that therapists and her too, can get caught up in anxiety and the struggle of trying to change things for the client rather than just being with them. She forgets less now how powerful that can be

22) J) One reason why she went into this work was to help others although it ended up helping her ten years on

23) J) It takes courage to go on and on even when it gets tough and you don’t want to but that’s the time when you have to look at whatever is happening

24) J) Although its different each time it does get less overwhelming because you have been there before

25) J) Although it sounds clichéd this is an ongoing learning process and clichés often have important meaning connecting them to something real

26) J) Clients undergo the same struggle to change which is difficult but staying where they are is shitty too and sometimes clients see that and decide not to

27) J) When clients said things off the top of their heads, or made throw away remarks in the early days J would always pick up on it now she is more able to wait and see if it
more able to let it go and just you know just put it away some where and pick up on it if it comes up again, there’s not that urgency to try and cover everything at once

28) She supposes she experiences that unknown bit in the room now and doesn’t know but doesn’t find out at this particular moment she can be with the unknown and feels really proud of herself that she can do that, sit with the unknown

29) it’s like ending with clients or anything to do with clients where in the beginning she used to get really troubled about that and now is much more able to uh live with the fact that she doesn’t know and is not gonna come up with the answers which is where her practice has moved on in that she can live with the unknown

30) therefore her clients have gone there with her in a way that somehow its ok and its not that she will that its, its something that’s happened in the room that is not even said but its happening and you see that’s when it gets difficult because then you have to start speaking of the unknown you know its happening but its difficult to find the words of what is happening but it is just happening.

J can recall saying to clients something is happening here and I’m not sure what it is and they are normally ok with that. That’s quite a special moment when neither of you know what’s going on and your past being able to describe it.

31) You see its something about there’s so much in therapy that’s about finding out the unknown, clients come and they want to find out and she has done that in her own therapy, find out what is it I wanna know what it is and then if I know what it is then I’ll be ok and of course when you’ve done that time and time again you realise that it’s short lived that actually the living process is kind of more maybe about unknowing.

32) That’s not right the need to know isn’t so strong so therefore it gets more interesting when you stop looking at what you can know and as she said earlier in her own therapy that’s where she has got to the stuff that she knows, and it normally happens when she is looking at theory, things come up which she can explore and understand

33) at the moment because she is not reading much about theory she is beginning to open up
to things other than everyday experiences you know everyday problems and that kind of stuff and is not sure where its going and what its about

34) J wonders whether she was in that place before she started all this just thinking about it maybe she was in a better place, no that’s not true is it really. No its strange isn’t it because to get where she is she has had to go through learning about herself. Its only now that she has learned about herself the known that she can explore what she thinks what she says rather than link it to the written word

35) J thinks she would have liked to have been able to do that before all of this but wasn’t in a place to do that, wasn’t thinking for herself at all and was living her life through somebody else and wasn’t doing her own thinking at all

36) It was all said and acted out for somebody else and of course that’s why she ended up divorced because she started to become her own person and started just saying her own things, well they were mine and they weren’t mine

37) She found a letter which she’d known about and he was showing how angry and upset he was with her because of the way she’d treated him before the divorce leading up to the divorce and she doesn’t remember it like that just remembers about finding herself and that actually beginning to recognise who she was and that she had a voice and that was just too much for him to bear, so he was happy with the known the bit that he knew but he wasn’t prepared to see me differently, the unknown bit of her and the known bit of her

38) Its very difficult and of course she had a sense of becoming stronger and that was seen as being horrible and she was seen as destructive well she destroyed what was and that was very hurtful and she can see that how hurtful it was and is not sure that she could ever explain that or put that into words for him to understand that. She can see how awful a place that must have been for him cause that was her own process going on and she did change a lot.

39) Its that thing of you know that sometimes its easier to stay as you are but its not and as soon as you start to say its easy to not change and stay where you are but its not its shitty and

34 J) Although it may seem that she was in a better place before she started all this to get where she is she has had to go through learning about herself. Now she can explore what she thinks what she says rather than link it to the written word

35 J) Although she would have liked to be able to think for herself she was living her life through some one else

36 J) She did start to say her own things which she feels led to her divorce

37 J) She feels her husband was happy with what he knew of her but found it difficult to see her differently, both the unknown and known bits of her

38 J) Becoming stronger, changing, was seen as being horrible and destructive and she can now see how hurtful that must have been

39 J) It can seem easier not to change but its shitty to stay where you are and sometimes clients decide to stay with what they know even when they can see something they have not been able to see before
that’s often when clients come to see you when
they want to change but the changing is
difficult but the staying in it is shitty as well.
And she has had clients who decide to stay as
they are even when they can see something
they’ve not been able to see before they’ve
chosen to stay with what they know because
going with the unknown is hard.

40) Through a lot of soul searching and
determination and pain and struggle and those
kind of things and a lot of joy as well and
through support ongoing support from her
therapist and supervisor so that she was able to
go to those sort of places, there were times
when she doesn’t want to

41) J gets quite twitchy when she hears people
have got their diplomas and done their forty
hours and that’s it. But she knows that’s
wrapped up in her own process because how
can you go with this without going there
yourself

42) and her children have played a big part and
her parents and all the people involved in her
own story

40J) Going to those unknown places takes a lot
of soul searching, pain and struggle as well as
a lot of joy and support from her therapist and
supervisor helped

41J) How can you go with this with others
without going there yourself or if you stop at
getting your diploma or your forty hours

42J) Her children, parents and all the people
involved in her story have played a big start
APPENDIX FOUR – Data analysis, stage five

Individual Portraits

Dave:

My first thought is that I discovered that therapy partly depended on my capacity to tolerate not knowing although in the early stages of training I hoped that it would equip me with knowing which I could then apply so that I could predict the outcome. This is only partially true as there are great big holes where it isn’t. In this therapy is like life which is a mystery where we cannot really answer profound questions like: what am I, what am I doing here, or what is here. So therapy involves investigating the stuff of life and to imagine that one could know it is an illusion which is a comfort that we might hang on to for a bit. Tolerating not knowing is part of personal and professional development. People are very affected by their training but that recedes into the past, it’s the experience that is going on. Like students clients may come to therapy hoping they are going to know something.

There are different ways of knowing things: academic finding out about through studying where you learn to define and also knowing that comes from immersing oneself in situations where the doing becomes embodied and where there are things like wisdom and intuition. This kind of knowing arises within the parameters of a particular situation. There are also different levels of knowing. Knowing as an absolute in all situations is rare but learning about or knowing how to operate in certain kinds of conditions is probably more common. We can know something in a situation but not where it is going or how to negotiate it. What we know is just enough to manage this bit. I see the therapist as a swamp guide who has been in swamps but not this particular swamp. As a result of experience he knows something of the terrain and the next step from where he is but not the way out. What we do know is hard to grasp and is in the language of the interaction but is something about how to manage the moment of the interaction. The swamp analogy illustrates the knowing that comes from experience and reflecting on experience so that you learn something. This is not like theories which are maps which detail the territory but are not the territory and so they are approximate and cannot be applied at each moment.

There are different ideas about intuition. Is it something you know or possess or does it come from outside yourself? It is not held in consciousness and is something that arises into consciousness out of a store of knowledge and experience that you don’t necessarily know you’ve got until the situation triggers it. You’ve only got it as a result of relevant experience and you may ask: ‘well how did I do that?’ Intuitive knowing is therefore not the same as knowing about something which can only take you so far. So like riding a bike the only way to learn is to ride the bike and unlike knowledge learned from reading you can’t unlearn it.

Knowing is only partial and unless I encompasses the unknown into the known I cannot do anything with it. We know that vital or spontaneous living means continuously moving into the unknown and the unfolding unknown is what we have to negotiate and turn into something known. Life can become a series of repetitions, rather then something new, where you turn the unknown into a rather safe formula that you devise. There isn’t more unknown in therapy than in living. When we
interact with the world we incorporate, accommodate or adapt to it by attributing meaning or some unknown things we ignore so what is unknown remains unknown. What we can do is not assume our meanings have a solid reality.

I see learning about the unknown is a journey of hope followed by disillusionment caused by repeated recognition that explanations are incomplete and partial. The hope manifested by doing different trainings and then finding out that each one doesn’t equip you to know in the real situation and as a result you become disillusioned. Then after a while you realise that all theories have limitations and therefore claims to knowing, whether historic or science are questionable as a defence against what it is like to live in the world. Its not that we can do without any knowledge but we do comfort ourselves that it has more solidity than it actually does. So different psychotherapeutic theories map out what we should do but they are not the same as the territory of practice and we eventually learn when they do not match, question the theory and chuck it away. Even theories that you then ditch continue to influence you and you cannot get rid of them.

Some of the problems with theory are that things look one way from one perspective and different from another, theories do not hold in certain circumstances and by studying different approaches you come to realise these things. Training tends to foster the hope of knowing as matching experience but I try to adopt a more critical stance, as a teacher, from the beginning where theory is a partially true way of looking at things which may be useful. So training is like a balance between fostering hope and creating scepticism without completely disillusioning people but that does not create certainty that one’s own orientation is right and the others are wrong. Training in higher education needs to change and perhaps in single schools of therapy too where people think they know. It is not that they don’t know anything just that their map is not as complete as they think. The therapeutic situation is also a balance between knowing and not knowing and is better the clearer we are that we do not know because otherwise we will make assumptions and not test the evidence. Then clients also make what the therapist thinks hold true regardless of anything else. So you cannot predict your course precisely which helps somebody else to become more open to experiencing whereas knowing how to get where you are going is not conducive to learning either about something or from experience.

This way is more existential but it is difficult as some people want to have it nailed down, that’s the climate we are in. As a teacher I do not want to deliver the same thing twice but others do because it is too frightening, exposing and vulnerable. Being too pre planned deprives the learning of life and it can be a bloody shambles although I can take the risk and function well enough to deal with emerging demands. Any pretence that you know is a defence against the terror of authentic living. From a phenomenological perspective these claims to knowledge are not real and can look inadequate or ludicrous, knowing is never complete. There is truth in the idea that the unknown is frightening so we try to turn the unknown into the known so that we can predict, control and manage it so that we won’t be taken by surprise. We underestimate our ability to manage the unknown and probably are doing that anyway but we just don’t like thinking about it. We really know that we don’t know what life is and what we are and what is. There is nothing new in this and didn’t Jung say towards the end of his life that the more he got to know the more he realised that he didn’t know anything.
Alan:

I immediately recognise that the question is problematic because the unknown cannot be learned or understood, so the I see the question as philosophical as Casteneda says you have to tell the difference between the unknown and the unknowable which in psychotherapy is to do with working effectively with a patient and what they bring which is unknown, the patient is the unknown. I am interested in Bion’s idea of K and the idea that we do not reach back into the unknown so much as the unknown emerges into it. This is seen as a mystical idea and also phenomenological in that we will only come to know the unknown in the way we are capable of constructing it which will always be an approximation.

It’s a challenge in life to know the unknown and I feel that it is a matter of pride that I can say I am open to the unknown but the reality is different because being confronted with the realisation that I don’t know something I thought I understood is shocking. An example of this is in supervision when I am asked how I know something and realise I cannot forget memory and desire so I continue to understand my patients by what I already understand and know. I see learning as a long struggle to push at the idea that I am supposed to understand and instead ask the patient what he means. This is helpful but also uncomfortable. I didn’t realise this all through training and tolerated my teachers’ views that they had something to teach me and found learning about theory exciting but still didn’t know I didn’t know. I kept sustaining the idea throughout my career, that I had an intuitive gift which enabled me to hide my anxiety. It was not until my divorce, which shocked me, turned my life upside down and brought me back to supervision and psychoanalysis where I realised I had hidden my lack of confidence behind my belief that I had an instinctive understanding of what to do. Despite my success as a psychotherapist it was a shock to discover that I could learn a lot more through new knowledge which I do not see as the unknown but perhaps the difference between what you didn’t know and what you didn’t know you didn’t know.

The beginning of my formal learning about science was at school and university and was surprising, and I also found this in psychotherapy training too. There was a lot of repetition but not a revolutionary kind of learning so I kept learning with the same sort of arrogance. I realise now as a teacher that through repetition you find the unknown lurking in the known, for example by looking at clinical experience and then re looking at a theme you already know. As a psychology student I learned about the importance of cultural difference and now see that as a psychotherapist you have to learn the patient’s world view and you have to start as an infant would by not understanding or by beginning a session feeling clueless, which leaves me feeling inadequate because I am supposed to understand and don’t.

Free association has been a part of this learning. Through an experience in a group with a charismatic leader I learned that I could see a lot of things the facilitator could not even though he was very perceptive, because I was free to do pretty much what I liked and my attention could hover where it liked and pick up things the facilitator couldn’t because he had to keep in touch with everybody. The idea of free association helps me to recognise the difference between knowing the right intellectual language, like the patient who wanted to understand free association even though she was talking freely compared to another patient who didn’t know the theoretical words for
it and instead of speaking intellectually the patient just did it. In becoming caught up in intellectual language therapists are more concerned by whether they know than whether the patient knows what he himself means. I have also been able to identify something that was unknown to me as my assumption that patients know perfectly well, as they freely associate, what they mean. Because it seems so obvious to me how different associations fit together I would wonder whether they are just feeding me because they are trying to reassure me. The question of why I would think they needed to reassure me leads me to my own anxiety.

Even though I believe that if something is meaningless it is because meaning has been destroyed I realise that I am afraid that I couldn’t make the meaning or will make the wrong meaning, as I do sometimes. The fear is also what stops you being arrogant which is both normal and pathological. It could for example be possible to be dubious about one’s understanding without being anxious. Of my own arrogance I think that learning about things intellectually didn’t make me feel the pain of ignorance or help me to think about technique so therefore I knew it all already. My arrogance remained immune to my ignorance. If I had learned to be more tolerant of not knowing I would have been less arrogant, learned more and been more open to supervision and therapy rather than having to catch up now, later in my career.

Being shocked and shaken up means a revolution when the unknown bites you in the leg so it is painful and disruptive. I believe we resist the unknown which surrounds us, unlike Budhists who are able to empty themselves out of existence and capable of something new because they have given up resistance and are comfortable in the assumption that knowing is provisional and contradictory. I also remember an experience when I was told that its only when you have had ten years experience, after qualifying, that you have any idea what this is about but even then I still didn’t.

As Bion says it takes this long because learning is catastrophic and if you learn something you enter a new world which means that you become a new person which means that the old person dies. This reminds me of a patient and the terrible insecurity of not having something to identify with and this is the kind of learning I mean which is against identification and when you unidentify it feels like crossing a chasm. This opens up the pathological aspect of anxiety about learning because if I am not who I think then I am nobody and narcissism defends against this, tries to hide it. This means I cannot engage in learning which involves change in who I am. So a key aspect of safe practice becomes a question of whether students can go on learning after training rather than making sure they never learn anything again because training is only the beginning of learning.

Bion’s idea of O is important to me because it is shocking to psychoanalysis to see the unknown as a sea surrounding the capsule that we are living in. The idea of O is therefore revolutionary in psychoanalysis because like the collective unconscious it is not a personal unconscious but arises intuitively and we construct it. Coming to know something is mystical because it is not through the power of reason or the senses. Here is a different kind of mental power which is revolutionary, anti scientific, anti materialist and disruptive. O has turned my thinking about psychology, from this biological perspective believing that consciousness could be explained by physics and chemistry and information processes, on its head. The kind of science that understands consciousness might not be anything like science as we know it but once
you know it in a tested out way it becomes scientific. Patients for example don’t believe their feelings are real like material objects. I believe it’s the other way around, the only thing you know is the reality of your own emotions, for example because it hurts. Knowledge comes to us not through information processing but through intuition which pushes us towards the spiritual or religious and there is not much more that can be said. We have never found out what happens after death either.

Kevin:

The unknown asks the question how do I live in this world and this question cannot separate out the therapist and the person. My journey in life parallels my learning as a therapist and started by not knowing then knowing by learning new skills and then not knowing. Up to thirty years ago I would have said I didn’t know in a defensive way because I was supposed to say it. Up until twelve years ago, having been a counsellor for twenty five years I was applying strict psychodynamic principles, and then I had a breakdown. It was awful for me and I considered suicide and saw a psychiatrist, so there was another sacred cow gone.

When I went back to work a client told me I was different and when I heard what she was saying I thought it was that whilst I know myself better I also know I don’t know and if I don’t know. So I can say that if there was a bomb alert I can have no knowledge of how I will behave until it comes. More recently with the same client I felt I was able to stand with her like Hansel and Gretel stood at the edge of the wood. I had realised in supervision that I had not known that I had been holding her story of abuse for too long and was then able to acknowledge that how she chooses to live with that knowledge is down to her although neither of us then knew what to do. So what I have learned is that it is the relationship that is important in counselling and teaching and it is there that I learn what I am capable of. A personal unknown is when you do not try to fix the relationship. If you are trying to make the world a better place not knowing is too frightening. I recognise I wanted the world to be a good place but accepting all kinds of experiences, good and bad, means that you are in a clearer place to not know rather than know which is trying to gain power over the world.

Whilst there are mysterious unknowns such as looking out in the sky at night which scared me when I was twenty there is also the unknown of going through something with people and the unknown occurs as the transpersonal in the moment which is indescribable and ineffable. Another moment when I experienced the unknown was in the presence of a young woman whose husband had died in violent circumstances and something of the client’s sense of her husband’s presence communicated itself to me. I felt that the fact that I am also not particularly afraid of death helped too. I feel people trust me when they are dying because I am not really scared and this is important too with clients and even in first sessions I do not feel the need to make it easy because people need to know that you are unafraid or if you are afraid you can handle it and talk about it.

I see my involvement with religion as a way of making the unknown known. Partly through intellectual luck and the ability to take up opportunities I began to see all kinds of discrepancies as between: theology and sociology and education and English
and psychology. Whilst my scholarship of theology still informs my work and is a source of richness I think it is also a huge defence against unknowing so instead of wanting to be held by that and knowing what it is, I know that I don't know. I don't know anything about the unknown but then I cannot swim either so it is something like jumping off the edge of the sea or the pool. So although I love different theories it is all tosh really if you take it like a religion. So you can know everything theoretically but this is a construct that doesn't actually exist. Instead it is about bearing and feeling pain and not wearing a suit of armour so you don't have to. In the discourse of counselling in this age of regulation it is difficult to say that we need to take such a risk, as people might think I have no boundaries but if we don't we might as well play golf or do karaoke!

The unknown is a deeply inner place, not some state of being or some place out in space and its to do with not knowing even what is right. So counselling is about the shared danger of not knowing the way out and the only thing the counsellor has is some kind of faith that they will. While there might be a right way to live I don't believe in absolutes but in intersubjective understanding and of course I do not know what that would be. I think that losing the ability to not know occurs when I am feeling insecure such as when I go back to my earliest place of deep not knowing, not belonging, danger and fear and that is when I reach for the known. An example of the known is all the psychodynamic things I obeyed with a deeply depressed client. I believe I deepened the client's despair by appearing to know which increased the client's appearance of not understanding what he knew. I was caught in the idea that I was supposed to know but obviously I didn't know it well enough so I kept going to supervision. I became a proxy counsellor and the client a proxy client. My knowing missed the client whereas my unknowing might have been able to meet him authentically.

I feel there was a lot of madness in my family which I see as an attempt to know or reach an alternative reality rather than allow unknowing so I confused unknowing with madness. Part of my learning about this has come from a time when I couldn't distinguish between people who had learned humility and people with wild schemes. If these latter people were right then I must be wrong and it is only in the last fifteen years that I have not been interested in people who know. People can play at being mad too in order to escape their reality preferring to think of themselves as paranoid or delusional rather than face what has to be faced. Another madness was growing up in madness and confusion where you could not tell the difference between madness and unknowing. If you don't know you position yourself differently. Learning to cope with unknowing goes with an increasing capacity to look an ass and not mind too much in the sense of hurting to the core. I think there may be a connection here with narcissism and the ability to not know. I have learned these things in technical terms from a change in ontology which is not intellectual but to do with my own being and the capacity to wonder. I have to tussle with experiences in order to understand. Like the story of Jacob wrestling with the angel until the angel gives him his name. The name represents power. My tussles have been around the pain of childhood, compulsive religion, coming out of a divorce and leaving my children. Knowing what these experiences are to me, as opposed to leaving them floating, conversely takes me to the unknown. Plato spoke of the examined life which cannot be the teacher unless you are able to engage with it. Courses didn't touch me in the
way that the experiences of life has, such as having a breakdown or falling in love or weeping over my children.

Mel:

When I begin to think about the unknown I panic wondering whether I know and try to grab at something by thinking of theory. The more I think about it the more I think it underlines my philosophy of psychotherapy which is that working in this field and life are connected. Whilst there are boundaries when working my personal philosophy and working one are the same. I have a belief that there is something we cannot know and cannot conceptualise and if you speak about it words peter out. I connect that to day to day working and striving to hold the belief that there is something unknown and it is a striving because I recognise I will want to grab onto what I know about what a client says.

The unknown manifests in tiny little everyday ways rather than a life time spiritual experience such as a numinous contact. The little things are to do with a state of being rather than a particular thing. There is a client who struggles to stay in the room and be with me, sometimes literally, especially during psychotic or disturbed pockets and when words fail. At the same time something happened to me in my own therapy where I experienced a sort of limbo state where I didn’t know what was going on in my mind or what was inside and what outside, there was no difference. I realised this was related to my patient and not being able to say what it was or what was happening and I didn’t want to pin it down. I hesitate because I don’t want to sound like the new age, one big happy family, spiritual connection. I have the idea of something mystical which might be the idea of unconscious to unconscious communication linked to the idea of the collective unconscious as a way in which we are all connected. It is difficult for me to talk about because it connects to beliefs about spirituality which are difficult to talk about to others who have a different language and ideas, and the language fails. I am also wary because pinning it down would be like saying you know something about the unknown. There is a point where thinking and words have to stop, the unknown is something other. This might be an acknowledgment or respect of that area of our experience as human beings that cannot be reached by another or by ourselves. In a theoretical way I see this as related to Michael Fordham’s scientific approach to ideas about the self as an innate potential so the unknown is that which drives us like a life force as unknowable, but we can know bits through our experience without knowing it. It cannot be known except through contact with the world.

I realise it is reaction against something which starts me thinking about my experience of religion. So my reaction is related to another way in which the unknown has been conceptualised and presented to me throughout my life by trying to say what god is. When I began training as a counsellor I began to get hold of the idea of the unconscious as a way of conceptualising the unknown and then at a conference where I met people who were both therapists and priests I realised you could put those things together and wondered how. My first psychotherapist who was also a priest had a profound effect on my thinking about that and I have noticed recently that this spiritual element was more present in that therapy than my current one. Currently I think this unknown is something that is lived and cannot be said in thinking about
experience which is why I cannot find the right word for that experience. It was a profound lived experience of the unknown and being able to allow that to be. This capacity to live with the unknown is not a comfortable way, is more than intellectual knowledge and is a lived thing that underpins. I am not sure whether I knew this at the time because it was my first experience of in depth therapy and because issues about idealisation and transference make it difficult to distinguish what I know. It is only recently that I have begun to see that because of the feelings around ending that therapy

I connect this feeling to a seminar last evening which was about therapy as an ethical activity and being there for another takes you beyond, such as the paranoid schizoid position. Even beyond the depressive position is still about the idea of guilt and reparation which is a narcissistic element. This ethical position of being there for the other without wanting anything back and being prepared to take responsibility connects with the unknown as the feeling of the importance of living and being these things rather than an intellectual belief

These days I think of the theory as important because we have to strive to put words to our experiences including our experiences of the unknown which connects with the idea that we come into existence in relationship to others. This linking of theory and experience reminds me of the experience of reading a paper by Donald Meltzer where he points out that unless you have experienced claustrophobia what he is saying would probably sound like rubbish. His description of a patient registered. Another paper by Michael Fordham called ‘defences of the self’ only made sense later after working with a particular training patient. There is a different way of approaching theory than as a picture of the world which is a way of describing an experience, realising this can quite often happen and we collect it under these headings. So training depends on how theory is taught either as gospel or not. There is a paradoxical way to begin a process of thinking about and having experiences about the unknown but it has to be lived with integrity and belief. Bion for example had a complex theoretical argument on one level but he could also allow for the unknown part, but you cannot say its all unknown.

My experience of the best teachers is that there is something profound in their belief and like the teacher last night, very little is said but the way something is presented speaks volumes. In the end with even rare and remarkable figures such as Christ or Gandhi, maybe people like Freud or Jung it came down to how they were in the world, their presence. This connects to the unknown because it is to do with how you think about knowledge and how you teach which is spiritual where god words come into it. These ideas develop over time but it is difficult to take yourself back and know what you were believing at any one time. The internal process doesn’t have a time relationship to external things that’s easy to identify. This raises questions about what attracted me to this type of work which I see as a change in my belief system moving from law and pinning things down which I found unsatisfactory whereas in psychotherapy there is more room for not knowing. The idea of just allowing the unknown can be something to hold onto in the midst of realising that you can argue any phenomenon from any angle.

I feel I am not making a lot of sense and what happens when we lose a known area which gives confidence, is that the words disappear and I become a gibbering idiot.
This is like the breaking down of boundaries and psychotic experience which is also like my experience of writing. The process of training and analysis is somewhere that you can experience your own madness. Again I am wary of Laing’s view which can result in denying the real pain and difficulty that people experience. It is in this area though that lies a spiritual and growth experience. People like Freud and Jung all had their period of madness or encounter with the unknown or the unconscious rather than unknown. Living with the unknown bit that we call madness has the fear of the boundaries going, not knowing, no anchor points. Our capacity to bear the madness is related to acknowledging the unknown and bearing the terrifying underlying fear of annihilation because letting go of everything known is like not existing. The ultimate state is not existing and the question of whether we can live without a fear of death. This spiritual aim is connected to the unknown and the infinite where there is no division between me and you, one thing and another. Existence on the other hand is defined by division which is the only way we can describe it. This is what links ideas of what we call madness, fear of losing my mind. I am glad I got to the infinite, existence and division as I have thought about it a lot and the way we defend against that terrible fear. Division involves the minute we speak or conceive of ourselves we name or define it as opposed to something else.

Sara:

What the unknown means for me is in terms of experience of a personal journey from which I discovered the importance of being true to yourself. The journey was long and came about through training and through therapy which strengthened my belief sufficiently to make the leap. My story begins from being in a marriage where I now feel my partner had a borderline personality disorder and I wanted to get away from all the holding and containing I did at enormous cost to myself. Repressed material was surfacing in dreams of escaping although part of me wanted to stay too. When I began to train as a therapist I saw it as a huge adventure and something began to change emotionally and intellectually. Although I felt grudging about starting therapy, which was a course requirement, I embraced it wholeheartedly. It gave me the strength to do something about my personal situation. After eighteen months I made an enormous leap into the unknown and moved away to the West Country. Although I was quite unhappy I needed to see all the seasons through before making a decision to come back to the area where I had lived. This leap into the unknown was painful because I wasn’t embraced as I had hoped but it was a learning curve which gave me strength. I wonder about my frequent use of the word strength which has come from the struggle of life which I feel enriched by and which informs my practice. My own struggle means that I can over identify and want clients to do the same as me although I have realised not everyone necessarily does. I find that many of my clients also struggle with whether or not to leave a relationship but I have to hold in mind that although I left, survived and am enjoying life other people are different.

I wonder about my concrete way of relating my experience to the unknown and if the researcher was thinking more abstractly such as the unknown out there in the universe and the question of are there others out there and my sense of not knowing. I must be quite a concrete person as I don’t think about these abstract ideas. I think more about the reality of my life rather than fantasy. Although I don’t think the unknown has a
concrete sense I am relating it to myself in a concrete way, as an experience of a journey into the unknown rather than the unknown as a future.

My way is to look back at the past and my own history, which is informed by my psychoanalytic background and orientation, before I can look at and cope with the vastness of the future. Learning from the past also keeps me safe. The future as unknown is so vast that seeing how I coped in the past reminds me that I can tolerate the emotion of the unknown and contemplate future unknowns so having made one leap of faith when not knowing about the future has made it less frightening. Having assumed the unknown as the future I begin to think there may be unknowns in the past but that for me it is the future. Seeing the unknown as the future makes it more manageable because it could be scary to many people when you don’t know what is going to happen in the future so live in the here and now. The unknown is about not knowing and I don’t know what to add to that.

Living in the here and now and not thinking about the future has meant I am contented. When I was unhappy I was always looking ahead and trying to map out my life, dot every i and cross every t because of the anxiety. A map is a way of containing and holding massive anxiety which I see now in clients whose attachments are not strong. The idea that clients find their way to the counsellor they need resonates with me as I have lots of clients who are at transitional stages especially with the dilemma of whether to leave some one. I am mindful of not over identifying and have to carry the tension. Is tension the right word, yes the reality for me is that I don’t know and whilst it may sound like I am not coping my identification may also help communication.

If you know the past you do not have a reason for coming to therapy whereas if you haven’t got a sense of family history, such as you were adopted, then there is a search for an identity which provokes questions like where do I come from and a struggle with not knowing. Not knowing about family history is tragic. I feel that not knowing your history creates a tension between longing to know and not knowing what knowing would result in such as a shattering of fantasies. Our memory is hard to carry and clients carry the ambivalence towards me when they are caught in the hopelessness of not being able to go back or go into the future, when they are in no-man’s-land.

Another unknown is that having worked very intimately with some one for a long time we do not know what will happen to clients when they leave. Do we know anything or do we have to assume we know in order to hide that we don’t know. A lot of what we think we know we have been told we know, we are told what is. I think this is about certainty and uncertainty questioning whether knowing is the same from one person to another. I feel I have learned mostly through experience and just being alive. I would question whether anyone knows how you can know other people, perhaps through therapy and supervision. Having a sense of where you came from and your own personal history is what helps you cope with the unknown. Training has reinforced and verified her belief in history. I had this belief of being fascinated by family history and old photographs, before training and am intrigued by people who are not interested in that. This helps me cope with the unknown. Having been here nearly an hour its about as much unknown as anyone can deal with as it is so vast.
There is a difference between the unknown and the unknowable. The unknown is something happening to some one that they know about but are either unconscious to, cannot disclose or are working towards disclosing. The unknowable is different and even when we know some things we cannot predict what will happen in the future. Students and clients get these confused especially when they want certainty. The unknowable is a quality which affects our practice of psychotherapy and how people live their lives. In fact it might transform peoples’ lives to know that certain things are unknowable because it takes the edge off their need for closure whereas the unknown is about trying to diagnose and solve problems.

The therapist as the observer also gets confused between the unknown and the unknowable although, for example, in the silence at the beginning of an interaction both are possibilities. This is like the unknown between me and you, where we do not know what each other are thinking although there are things known to ourselves. As a relationship hasn’t yet been formed each has to find their way and as they know more about each other things that are unknown become known.

The unknowable is another level of experience because in any encounter people cannot predict the outcome or what each will happen from moment to moment. Like the ninth wave in modern science, which is unpredictable, this reflects a move away from the idea that there is always cause and effect likewise in human affairs we cannot know what might be born out of a situation. So while we can consider what each person knows that will only be based on past experience we cannot predict what will happen and this has profound effects on practice and the way we structure sessions. In a talk James Hillman who responded to a question about his view that in very few cultures do they assume that what happens in the past effects who you are now. His problem with this is that if you introduce these narratives into therapy the client will subsequently structure their thinking along your lines. This is different to recognising that we do not know which is more phenomenological and which embraces the unknowable as well as the unknown and the principle that we cannot predict the effects of what may happen. For me this relates to a danger in psychotherapy of reducing people to past processes and hypothesising and diagnosing and working with them as though they fit with our theories because we react to them as though they are what we think they are. Whereas qualities of character mean that people can produce the unexpected like the character played by Shelley Winters in the Poseidon Adventure people can suddenly discover inner resources that are unknowable and appear come from nowhere.

These feats of character include things that I don’t know about myself which I discover, but what I will do as a result is unknowable until the moment. In my teaching of sub personality theory I believe that we label all these different character traits, which are really arbitrary, in order to describe clusters of needs, behaviours and experiences. We then look at these in a Newtonian way as the known to the unknown seeking to bring these unknowns to awareness in order to be liberated. I however introduce another element from post modernism and the idea that such personalities are born and die every moment and they are not products of the past or fixed and up to a point we can bring them to consciousness. The unknowable is something else as human characteristics are not predictable and arise in situations appearing from
nowhere, like in the film above, so we can never fully know who we are. For me the phenomenological approach views each situation anew and whilst there may be things we know there are others which are unknown so no situation is ever identical.

The recognition that there are always things that are unknowable keeps the work fresh and stops us being boxed up by our theories. One problem in training is that we have to make judgments about people’s futures which are only based on what we know now. But as a Psychosynthesis practitioner I do think that people go through transformations which are independent of working through your past baggage as knowable factors and thus cannot be predicted. So although we can say that some one has not reached certain places we expect, this is not the same as making a statement about how they are going to be for the rest of their life. Recognising a certain amount of any interaction between people is unknowable also keeps the therapist humble particularly in relation to power.

When I think of the unknown in relation to myself I link it to transference and counter transference, so although not everything is up for grabs there can be the emergence of something strange or unexpected which is Eros in its general sense as something coming alive, something entering the space and mixing in. I feel that hope is related to this whole discussion especially in terms of the unknowable. For example some one who is depressed and thinks knowing more about self, such as making the unconscious conscious, will cure them and when that doesn’t work they lose hope whereas starting from the pint of view that a lot of things are unknowable opens up the possibility for spontaneous change. Transformations do not come from any known course and so are unknowable. Hope and faith are both aspects of unknowability. Faith is not the same as in the Christian sense of unshakeable faith but rather faith that something can happen but you couldn’t say what will happen when. So as with sub atomic physics there are things which are not visible, measurable or observable and yet affect things in unpredictable ways. The ability to respond spontaneously comes from learning the rules and then knowing when to chuck them away.

I feel that very little of my learning about the unknown has come from formal teaching and training and things that have moved me have been things that teachers and trainers didn’t plan to say and were often asides or a bit of humour dropped in. As a teacher I don’t like overly set curricula because it stops the highways and bye ways where people do their real learning. I am more interested in imagination and experiences from books, films and travel and observations of the world. I also think that some ways in which I learn are unknowable and other things are what I choose to observe. The ability to observe and make something of your observation is a great leveller because it doesn’t reduce people to academic ability. People can learn to observe in the same way as the Taoists learn. In order to draw a bamboo you have to sit in it for years on end. Another way is to show how even in everyday life such as walking down the street things are not predictable. I think that because psychotherapy has become split off from everyday experience people do not draw on these experiences to help them understand others. One problem though is that people are also disconnected from observation of their experience such as when some one has been ill after eating in a restaurant and afterwards they say there was something funny about the food another is that we are trained in life not to trust our unsupported experiences. I have learned not to disregard even slight inconsistencies in people and
between my perception and knowledge of some one. This has led me to the view that things are probably more unpredictable and unknowable than we give them credit for. When I am running a training course I start with what I call a loose tool kit and depending on what comes I will run with it so no two courses are exactly the same. I do this because I want to operate by creating the space where the things that people really want to know will emerge and then they can deal with it.

Another aspect of the unknowable is that students tend to idealise their teachers thinking they are in control and it is a great revelation for them to realise that this person is not in control and does not have a grasp on certainty and if we can get people away from that idea it liberates idealisation from the power game as in the Wizard of Oz. Dorothy and her friends work on the assumption that the wizard will know and at a certain point she says you’re a very bad man and he says no I’m a good man but a poor wizard.

Overall I think these ideas are good enough because knowing is always shifting and the unknowable tends to affect the balance between the known and the unknown. Indeed Freud pointed out that he was making a distinction between what was unknowable and what was unknown at the time. The unknowable continues though and helps us realise that much of what we know is more what we believe, as in the idea that the sun went round the earth. Even things that are known need to be held lightly.

Jenny:

The unknown is in practice where the client is and what they are going to do is unknown. Each person has their boundaries but it is the space in the middle where you meet which is the exciting part of the unknown. I am not sure whether the research put the idea into my mind but at the moment I have noticed how it seems that my clients cannot cope with the unknown and they feel that everyone else is in control of what is happening for them and they are powerless. For example a client was caught in an unknown situation not being able to move forward or back and not knowing where you are which feels powerless. This client reminds me of my own therapy and not knowing what was going to come up was exciting, and my first therapist saying that you don’t have to come with an agenda was important. Initially people do come for therapy with an agenda and they don’t know what to expect which raises the question of whether it is for us to tell them what to expect based on our theoretical or any other formula. The whole process of practice is about the relationship as a safe, containing and holding space rather than working with an agenda. We do not have an agenda because there is so much unknown and you do not know what clients are going to walk in with you are going to be caught off guard by things linking with your own story which you have to be able to put aside.

I have learned about the unknown as like the unconscious which is not spoken about but appears through the way a person speaks or their dreams. There is that aha moment when we suddenly make a link between ourselves and something in the past which makes sense of how we are feeling or experiencing things. The unconscious is partly about the unknown because the unconscious is in the room and so is the unknown in terms of not knowing expectations and anticipations which leads to all
kinds of questions and anxiety. The anxiety happens when we do not know and as in the ideas of Bion or Fairburn not knowing is a terrible place or Bowlby where the unknown is not knowing whether the mother is coming back which leads to a terrible tension then relaxing into despair. The despair is almost like the unbearableness and unthinkable of being as on the face of the child in Bowlby's film when the other does not return. In despair the child sets up defences to never feel that gain. Having the theory is helpful but actually its just being with some one in space and time and finding out what is like for them because it is not known. I see the unknown as a void, an emptiness which clients sometimes have as a sense of a great gap inside them which they try to fill with trying different things. So there is the theory, our own experience of it and our client work as experience of what is happening unconsciously.

Another unknown is the unknown of what happens to clients when they leave and this makes me wonder what kind of people therapists are who put time and energy into working with people, see them change and then they go away and you don’t know anything more about them. That is not our privilege to know as this work is unusual and not like medicine where you diagnose, treat, follow up and make sure everything is stitched up and working.

Sometimes we feel comfortable just to be in that space with not knowing and sometimes we are not happy with the not knowing here. Not being aware of expectations and what other people want of you make it difficult to differentiate what is real between how we present ourselves socially compared to the social face we remove in therapy. We are not omnipotent so there will be so much unknown. For example I have a friend who cannot travel without planning every step of the way whereas I am just knowing the dates and times when I have to turn up. There is a difference here in being able to anticipate the unknown and not be phased or threatened by it whereas for others it is terrifying. I see this terror as being linked in part to past experiences. So a client comes and despairs about the state of the world and man and nature not getting together. But it wasn’t happening in his life either, so he was going off travelling and thought he would come to therapy to know more about himself before he goes. Does he want to know about the unknown inside him?

My own therapy allowed me to experience not knowing that I was experiencing and relating to the therapist as I would have done my father. I didn’t know this was happening at the time I just thought the therapist was a therapist, felt bored by it and forgot about it until the next time. Nothing happened which is why it took so long for it to lift so that I behaved in a way that expected retribution and the fact it never came was incredible. This is my experience of working with the unconscious when I didn’t know that it was. After about three and a half years my therapist lost her temper and shouted at me so I who waited until the end of the session, so I could get out, to say: “I thought I was the one who was bloody supposed to get angry.” Something changed in the relationship and in me, I found that I can speak out and be heard, I found my voice. Another area that I didn’t know was the boundaries in therapy, as firm and holding which allowed me to fill the space with all sorts of things and whilst I was conscious of these boundaries I hadn’t realised until afterwards that they were what made it safe to speak, that was unconscious. This learning as a growing experience helped me to develop my practice. In different ways this learning helped me to allow more of myself into the relationship, rather than being a blank screen, it allowed a
safe place to play. So therapy rather, than training allows a growing and broadening of that kind of experience.

Training gives you the baseline and a safety net and then in time you can allow a bit more fluidity in your practice. The fluidity is about allowing myself to be more human to feel more real and feel I can take things to supervision. Therapy helped me get over the feeling that I do not have to hide the things I have done. You cannot do therapy as a therapeutic relationship where two people connect with theories, so while you may draw on psychodynamic ideas to help link past patterns you also have the way that person is relating to you, there in the room. The struggling in this interview reminds me of being in an experiential group. At first you go in you don’t know what is supposed to be happening here and no one tells you so to begin with I would watch others, I thought I would wait til I figured it out. Meanwhile the not knowing is uncomfortable and I am beginning to wonder whether I am wasting time and realise part of my old self is coming back.

There isn’t a boundary round the unknown so it opens up the difficulty of speaking so there is a lot of wondering, trying to get a sense or feeling of what the other is saying and feeling by how we experience it so we can offer it back in some form that will allow them to experience something different. I link this with Klein’s ideas of projective identification as unknown feelings causing too much discomfort. This has to be experienced by the therapist in order to reintroduce it in a different way. This is like re experiencing something and giving it back so it can be experienced differently. That’s about the not knowing, the client does not know what it is that they are giving to us and we do not know what we are picking up or sensing. Its like counter transference isn’t it so we are experiencing something and can give it back. The therapist’s part is to break into the circular experience of something going round and round. This has been a struggle and I want to go home and look things up now.

Jan:

The unknown hasn’t been something I have learned about but something I have been able to read about and experience. There is a kind of paradox in that if you put your beliefs and thinking behind you can be open to what you don’t know but as soon as you think about that you get into thinking and believing. When there is nothing, as in no thinking, no understanding, no desire to, I am reached in a spiritual or mystic way that Rogers might call the core self but is difficult to put into words. I have experienced this spiritual, mystic place with clients but it is fleeting. It is a place of deeper understanding and closeness and yet doesn’t have to be about understanding. Yet out of it comes some sort of understanding in that this powerful experience is what gives me hope rather than the anxiety of understanding things and knowledge. This spiritual experience is like walking my dog on the cliff tops where the struggle and pain seem less present when getting in touch with nature which is extremely freeing. Some people would call this a religious moment but I am not a believer in god so much as something I am part of.

Learning about this kind of experience of the unknown involves moving away from theory. So while Rogers and Freud touched on it when they talk of the unconscious it is something other than theory and the unconscious which involves something being brought into the known. It is different. The idea of letting go of the theory is exciting.
as I am freer to struggle in a relationship with the client and freer in myself. The temptation is to read about, have knowledge of so that you can make this kind of experience happen but when it does it is not anything I have done. And yet listening to poetry or music takes you to that unknowing place which is powerful and freeing. Learning theory is helpful in understanding what is happening but I learn about the unknown differently, in a way that opens things up maybe like the theatre, poems, reading such as autobiographies where you don’t have to understand just accept what their lives were like. I wonder whether working with the client by linking their history to theory, and any theory can be made to fit, leaves you blinkered and closed down whereas I want to take the blinkers off. Taking the blinkers off means being and accepting the person as different to me and different to anybody, as unique. Theory can stop you really hearing and seeing what the other person is saying and who they are which is not always about change. This may sound simplistic but it is really deep and words cannot describe it yet it is to do with love, pure and simple not complicated or theorised, being rather than doing, yet we always want to find words which interrupt it. I listened to a religious bloke on the radio talking to a Jamaican tenor about his faith. The interviewer asked how do you help the weaker people in life and the tenor said of course you don’t treat people any differently or as weak people. What made me angry about this was the way people categorise others and then treat them. In my own experience of therapy the simple act of being with some one is empowering.

The ultimate unknowing is what happens when you die and as with freedom people come up with ways of avoiding the reality that there is nothing, or something. I used to think that because I did not have a faith that I was lacking something and so I tried to have a belief in god because then I would be ok. Now I don’t have that kind of belief although coming into counselling was about finding a belief. There is nothing that is going to make the loneliness better or make me feel good all the time, make my life perfect and I am more ok with the imperfections and when something happens to trap me in the awful struggly place again. What this does mean is that I can sit with my clients when they struggle and also know how difficult it is for them. I have had to go through learning about myself. Now I can explore what I think, what I say rather than link it to the written word rather than living my life through someone else. In my experience becoming stronger, changing was seen as being horrible and destructive and I can now see how hurtful that must have been. It can seem easier not to change but its shitty to stay where you are and sometimes clients decide to stay with what they know even when they can see something they have not been able to see before. Going to those unknown places takes a lot of soul searching, pain and struggle as well as a lot of joy and support from my therapist and supervisor helped. My children, parents and all the people involved in my story have played a big part in this learning. How can you go through this with others without going there yourself or if you stop at getting your diploma or your forty hours of therapy.

I feel that therapists and me too, can get caught up in anxiety and the struggle of trying to change things for the client rather than just being with them and I forget less now how powerful that can be. One reason why I went into this work was to help others although it ended up helping me ten years on. It takes courage to go on and on even when it gets tough and you don’t want to but that’s the time when you have to look at whatever is happening. Although its different each time it does get less
overwhelming because you have been there before and although it sounds clichéd this
is an ongoing learning process and clichés often have important meaning connecting
them to something real. Clients undergo the same struggle to change which is
difficult but staying where they are is shitty too and sometimes clients see that and
decide not to continue. In the early days when clients said things off the top of their
heads, or made throw away remarks I would always pick up on it now I am more able
to wait and see if it comes up again. There’s not that urgency to try and cover
everything at once and I feel proud that I can sit with the unknown as not needing to
know at a particular moment. Likewise I used to get troubled about ending with
clients and am more able to live with not knowing and not being able to come up with
answers. My clients seem to be able to go there too, when something is happening
that is past words and past even describing it, it’s a special moment, but it gets
difficult when you have to try to find words for the unknown

I think something is shifting in my own therapy, where I am feeling that I don’t need
take the everyday things I used to. While I recognise my struggle and feelings of
anxiety, unhappiness or sadness around those things I don’t have the desire to talk
about them and think something else, possibly the unknown, is opening up. I want to
know how to get to this kind of experience and yet you do not know where you are
going and if you planned it, it would upset that special unique moment. So much of
therapy is about finding out what is unknown and I have done that time after time in
my own therapy in the hope it will make things alright but then I realised that its short
lived. The living process is more about unknowing, more accurately the need to know
is not so strong and it gets more interesting when you stop looking at what you know,
which is perhaps where I am in my own therapy at the moment. Perhaps this is
happening now because I am reading less theory which opens me up to not knowing
where it is going rather than what I already know about.

Rachel:

I have thought a lot about the unknown and it hasn’t necessarily come about through
training and is with me more in therapy, my life and feelings about things. I think it
probably did come through training as well which opened my eyes to the fact that
none of us know and we cannot know what is going on with our clients who
constantly surprise me. The unknown is a whole package in life and I have become
aware that there is a great deal in life we cannot know.

Not knowing is incredibly important in practice because it makes room for reverie and
letting clients speak what they want to speak leading to a mixture of working in the
here and now as well as the way we are affected by our past yet without trying to pin
it down. The moment you start to talk about the unknown you don’t know, it could
lead anywhere, is difficult to get hold of and yet there is so much unknown about life
like will I be here tomorrow. So we cannot count on anything. However one reacts to
a situation, such as the Olympic bid being awarded to London, you can never know
how you would have reacted. Not knowing can be disappointing so some people
leave and some see it as part of the process.

In a way the unknown is about religion too and although I am not religious and don’t
think there is a god I realise that I don’t know and there may be spirituality. Not
knowing creates a lack of confidence and on the other hand not knowing is comforting because then it is all there to find out. The unknowns in my life could take me back to religion and the comfort of believing in an afterlife but for me the unknown of death and afterwards are things I can recognise and face now. But then I think whether knowing I would meet all these others in the afterlife might not be comforting.

My initial psychodynamic training was useful because I do think that people pick up things all through their lives but we cannot know whether the story we tell about it is true but psychodynamic training helps open things up so they are not set in concrete. I also came to understand that because of the way memory is altered along the way we cannot be sure about anything. These ideas came from philosophy which made me stop and think and ask what is knowledge? I have come to realise that the more I learn the less I know and unlike my grandmother at my great age I am glad to be taught to suck eggs! Instead of making me wonder what is the point of learning if we can’t ever know anything there is a constant tension to want to know more. Knowing is not set in concrete but is friable and mobile and always subject to change. Thus we can never be sure about what we know of our clients and need to remain open to their different ways of being, we have to remain unsure which extends possibilities. It is difficult to let another person understand this view of the unknown because it is brought about by just being with some one who is prepared to hang loose and feel they don’t know. Perhaps the ones who desperately want to know will leave.

I feel I am not being very helpful and not giving you what you want but I don’t know what you want. You have to be open to not getting what you want because you don’t know what you are going to get. The struggle in the interview with what you want is different from therapy, which I think is what I feel about the unknown and where I learned about it. Learning about the unknown has been an evolving process which I could lay at the door of the sort of education that has opened up my mind to thinking about the unknown. At the beginning I realised I had denied that training had anything to do with this learning. I have a vague feeling that what made me right for the training was my lifelong struggle. However I feel I cannot be sure because I am so different now to when I started. Its not so much that I don’t want to acknowledge the training but more the feeling that this is a lifelong struggle that training is a part of although maybe I couldn’t have articulated this struggle until the training came along. Likewise maybe counselling and psychotherapy opens up what is already there with our clients. This position of doubt and looking around us and thinking is what I desire for others and I can get quite angry with people who have one particular set. The question of the unknown is terrifying because I didn’t know if I could talk about it enough but also fascinating.

Whilst I am reluctant to pat everyone on the back and say how good they were I do realise that training did wonderful things for me mainly in being brave enough to look at myself although I cannot know what would have happened if I had stopped at my first training. Although I do not know how life would have been I think it would have been constricted, not just as a psychotherapist but as a person and I would not be enjoying the sadness and the happiness. I wonder about my resistance to acknowledging the training but realise I forget how hard it was to come up against your self. I feel I didn’t know how hard it was going to be or when you are in it but there is enormous pleasure in having come this far. So it has been painful and for
those around me to see me change and stay with me. In fact I am not sure if I would want anyone I am close to go for therapy because of what they might learn about themselves and about me.

As an aeroplane goes overhead I am reminded of the garden and how although this house was terrible when we bought it we fell in love with the garden. There was something unknown in knowing it was the right place to be. My second training was so awful and so wonderful and the not knowing was there on day one and on the last day it was still there along with knowing a lot too. Knowing and unknowing are both present so there are obvious things we know like we are sitting here but we do not know what to expect from each other or from ourselves so in a particular situation something just happens, anything can happen or nothing can come out of it. While there are knowns I don’t understand what the unknown is and maybe it is different to each of us. I read something of this in Paul Gordon’s book where he alludes to the unknown as something we cannot grab and maybe we are not supposed to.

I also learned about the unknown from being in a group and realising that everywhere we go we are going to be reacting to family members. It was unknown to me that this was going to happen and now I know what is happening and what taps into me in groups. Reading has also been helpful for example the writing of Levinas about being face to face and with some one without knowing who they are and being responsible without knowing what that will bring out. Constantly being questioned in supervision was a process of learning from being afraid to open my mouth and say what had happened with clients because I felt I couldn’t get it right leading to thinking I am not getting it right and then realising you are never going to get it right. It is ok to struggle to try and get it right which leads us to feel ok with the struggle to be with our clients, as knowing ourselves means we can be a sounding board for the other and their struggle.

When you first talk about the unknown it is unbearable but I am beginning not to find the unknown unbearable although this might be a defence as the idea of the thought of unknown things ahead might be unbearable to look at. The death of family members and my own death are difficult because I do not want to leave this wonderful life yet, rather than the idea of leaving for something unknown. I have given up on the idea of going to heaven and being with lovely people I know. I don’t have a faith and think it can be a way of getting through not knowing because then people don’t have to not know. I wanted to say of the unknown and my knowing is that it has been helpful in tapping into resources I don’t know I have and painful because going back over my learning leads me to remember things that dawned on me as time passed.
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