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a New Conception of Passion in Organisations

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A Passion for Excellence

a New Conception of Passion in Organisations

By Mikkel Svold

Abstract

This thesis examines how organisations can use passion to produce excellence. In order to put forth valid recommendations the thesis first suggests organisational theories and contemporary theories on passion to acknowledge a broader and more encompassing idea of what passion in the workplace is. In the thesis it is suggested to leave behind the instrumental discourse on employee passion, and leave behind the idea that passion is solely comprised by positive emotions of benefit to the organisations. Instead, a discourse of passion as an energy encapsulating both negative and positive emotions is suggested. It is also suggested that the passion of an employee has no immediate connection to the workplace, but is rather hinged upon a love for a specific craft – a love understood in the philosophical term of being the feeling of unity with the loved object.

With this discourse the thesis precedes to suggest three major themes that enable organisations to include organisational outputs into the passions of the employees. Firstly, it is suggested that organisations induce a profound sense of love between the employees and the organisational outputs. Secondly, it is suggested that organisations help employees develop in order to create a feeling of getting closer to complete mastery, and hence unity, with their craft. Thirdly, the thesis suggests organisations to nurse a culture, which has large notions of trust and acceptance of nerdery (as defined later) and emotional engagement, as this would make the organisation be the place where immersion into the craft is culturally acceptable and not abnormal. With these ideas, the employees are expected to engage into persistent deliberate practise, which in turn would create organisational excellence.

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1 Introduction

'Le mieux est l'ennemi du bien'
− Voltaire

Voltaire's words − 'the perfect is the enemy of the good' − underscores the baseline of this thesis. With an ever-increasing access to 'good' quality products and services, due to the increasing buying power of a growing middleclass, and decreasing prices due to innovations in production, the demand for an even higher quality is on the rise. Organisations can no longer suffice with offering good −or even great− products, as consumers increasingly ask for the ultimate quality (e.g. Holmes 2014): consumers increasingly ask for excellence.

In this thesis, I join the line of researchers who find that in order to depart from the notion of high quality and arrive at excellence, organisations must move beyond ordinary theories of worker motivation, and focus their efforts on a stronger driver: *passion*. Hence, if you ask a professional ballet dancer, it is not a *motivation* for dancing, which pushed him through long days of agonizing training or kept him persistent through hardship and disappointments; it is, I believe, his *passion* for dancing. Or ask an MIT nuclear science professor, and she will tell you that *motivation* was not what kept her up late hours to finish her doctorate; *passion* was. Or ask Steve Jobs, Richard Branson, Warren Buffet, Blake Mycoskie, or Peter Aalbæk, and I am sure, they will all say the same: passion is necessary for excellence. Indeed to go from ordinary to good, great motivation is needed, but to go from good to truly extraordinary, only passion seems to provide the required energy.

I myself, love excellence. I love visiting the nearby award winning café, where a single cup of drip coffee (or filter, as most people would call it) takes 15 minutes to make. Not because I enjoy waiting, but because I love watching the enthusiasm and intensity of the barista when he, in deep concentration, pours the black brew into a preheated, purpose build cup and serves it to me, as if it were a fragile and invaluable ancient piece of papyrus. And as for the taste, it's

the taste of immense skill, great dedication, and pure love. It is with this thought in mind I wish to contribute to the knowledge of passion in organisations, so that the experience of excellence will be the ordinary one, rather than the extraordinary. In order to do so, I wish to qualitatively investigate the following question:

How can organisations use passion in producing organisational excellence?

To answer the question, the thesis will, in chapter 2, (the Literature Review), critically examine the existing literature on work passion, in order to then propose an alternative understanding of what passion in organisations entails and how it will drive excellence. In chapter 3, the Methodology, I will elaborate the reasons for and manners of the qualitative research, which form the base for the analysis in chapter 4. While recognising that an exhaustive answer to the research question will be beyond the scope of this thesis, I will, in the analysis, propose and elaborate four central themes, which have proven significant to the concept of passion of employees in excellence seeking organisations. Before concluding on the analysis, I will, in chapter 5 (the Discussion), discuss the discourse in order to arrive at a solid conclusion to the research question, in chapter 6.

Hence, the following chapter will elaborate on relevant research in order to create an understanding of the underlying discourse of this thesis.

2 Literature Review

'For we see that they are all in their nature good, and that we have nothing to avoid but misuse or excesses of them'
– Descartes (1989, p.132)

In this chapter I review key contemporary research on employee, job, and work passion, and discuss them against a more general philosophic concept of passion. By the end of the chapter, I will propose my understanding of the connection between passion and excellence, and clarify the discourse with which the qualitative analysis has been made.

Throughout history, questions of passion and emotion have been of the interest of scholars, philosophers, and artists. Passion, love, desire, and even obsession are all prominent subjects in historic literature across religious texts, folk stories, and academic literature. Examples include everything from The Bible or the tales of The Arabian Nights, to the lessons of Socrates (Rowe 2012), Plato (Amir 2001), and Aristotle (Kraut 2001). Even much later philosophers have been occupied with the subject. Defining passion and the reasons behind it have taken up the attention of famous philosophers like René Descartes (1989), Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan (Ferrell 2006).

2.1 Contemporary Organisational Passion

More recently, passion has entered the context of organisations, which historically has been dominated by motivational theories (for reviews, see Waldstrøm et al. 2011). With motivational theories evolving alongside the needs of the surrounding society, the development has gone from efficiency focussed theories during the industrial revolution (i.e. Taylorism, reviewed by Jones 2000), over more HRD and psychology minded content (i.e. Maslow 1954; Herzberg et al. 1959; Alderfer 1972) and process theories (i.e. Vroom, reviewed in Waldstrøm et al. 2011). Among the latest developments in motivational theories, we find research on emotional intelligence of leaders (Zhou & George

2003), and extrinsic versus intrinsic motivation (reviewed in Pink 2009), which has largely evolved from research within the creative industry (among others Amabile 1996; 2006; Csikszentmihalyi 1996; 2006). This latest branch of motivational theories, bring us back to the now-emerging concept of work passion.

As with the latest motivational theories, the research on passion in organisations also largely seem to be based on the creative industries (i.e. Vallerand et al. 2007; Murnieks et al. 2012; Charlton 2015; Breugst et al. 2012) or within the domain of sports (i.e. Donahue et al. 2009; Vallerand et al. 2008). Whether people within those two industries are generally more passionate than in other industries is hard to say, but one reason for the starting point of organisational passion research to be in sports and creative industries, may be because those two are largely driven by either immense endurance and acceptance of pain (sports), or high emotional involvement and affect (creativity in organisations (Zhou & George 2003)).

The proximity of work passion's research domain, to that of intrinsic motivation, does seem to have some kind of a spill over effect. Hence, although passion and intrinsic motivation by nature are indeed two different concepts, the theories and definitions of passion in the organisational context do carry some traits of intrinsic motivation.

While intrinsic motivation is most often described in terms of employee autonomy, mastery, and challenge (Deci et al. 1991; Amabile 2006; Csikszentmihalyi 2002), *passion* in the organisational context has been subject to different definitions, from 'loving one's job', 'experiencing meaning from one's job', or 'being engaged in one's job' (Ho et al. 2011). As Ho et al. (2011, p.27) notes, 'it is difficult for researchers to synthesize the body of work,' because of the lack of consensus of the definition.

However, since 2011, it seems that some definitions have penetrated and is now dominating the field of passion in organisational contexts: (1) the notion of Job Passion (Ho et al. 2011) and (2) of Employee Work Passion (Vallerand & Houlfort 2003; Zigarmi et al. 2010). With reference to above stated issues concerning the difference between intrinsic motivation and passion in organisations, scholars seem to agree that passion entails an integration of the

job into one's deeper personality (Ho et al. 2011; Vallerand & Houlfort 2003), a trait intrinsic motivation does not possess (Deci & Ryan 1985).

2.2   The Instrumental Passion

Looking at the two definitions of passion, it is clear that they encompass two entirely different ideas: the first focussing on the individual, and the latter on the organisation. As for Employee Work Passion, it bears closer resemblance to ordinary theories of motivation. In example, Zigarmi, Diehl and colleagues commences their article *Employee Work Passion* (2011, p.24) by asking: '…who is actually responsible for creating a motivating work environment […]?', whereas, to follow the line of their title, they should, and could have asked the same thing about creating an *impassioning* work environment. Because their discrimination between passion and motivation in this particular article is weak, the result of their research (a twelve-factor model) cannot be assigned to passion per se, but could just as well be factors facilitating mere (high) work motivation. In addition, I note, for instance, that the twelve factors do not vary significantly from the points made by Teresa Amabile (2006) or Daniel H. Pink (2009), who undoubtedly are considering the facilitators of employee motivation and creativity – not passion.

Furthermore, Zigarmi and colleagues' (Zigarmi et al. 2009; Zigarmi, Nimon, et al. 2011; Zigarmi, Houson, et al. 2011) definition of Employee Work Passion, I will argue is a result of a western instrumental and organisational utilitarian discourse, which does not consider passion as a quality belonging to the employee, but rather an energy source which only has purpose, if it contributes to, and is in line with, the organisation, hence their definition:

> 'Employee work passion is an individual's persistent, emotionally positive, meaning-based, state of well-being, stemming from reoccurring cognitive and affective appraisals of various job and organizational situations that *result in consistent, constructive, work intentions and behaviors*,' (Zigarmi et al. 2009, p.310, emphasis added)

My argument of Zigarmi and colleagues' confusion of passion with motivation is underpinned by this notion of organisational utilitarianism with

the argument presented by Linstead & Brewis (2007, p.357) that 'the discourse of motivation sits against [read: is a part of] a wider discursive backdrop of modern western instrumentalism.' The connection to instrumentalism is what differentiates the concept of Employee Work Passion from that of Job Passion.

2.3   The Individual and Philosophical Passion

Job Passion, on the other hand takes a different approach. By starting from the individual affection and cognition surrounding their passion, Violet T. Ho and her colleagues (2011, p.28) define Job Passion as 'a job attitude comprising both affective and cognitive elements that embody the strong inclination that one has towards one's job,' and refers to 'an intense liking for and enjoyment of the job'. Notably, Job Passion does not entail the instrumental discourse of Employee Work Passion, as nowhere in the definition is it mentioned that the passion should contribute to the organisation (Ho et al. 2011). Hence, the link between passion and motivation seems less significant, and is more closely related to the philosophical understanding, which has been developed over centuries.

Comparing Ho et al.'s (2011) Job Passion to that of philosophers, one major difference surfaces: Job Passion is described only in positive terms, while the philosophical concept of passion is described more as an energy without preference for good or bad (Lawrie 1980). To enrich the research on employee passion, I believe it is imperative to embrace this understanding of passion as a compound energy comprised by emotions. For this purpose I find the work of René Descartes especially suitable.

In his last work, *The Passions of the Soul* (1989), Descartes rationalistically observes and describes the underlying emotion of human passion. In defining passion, he points to a large number of feelings from the entire emotional spectrum in describing passion: Wonder, Esteem, Disdain, Love, Hatred, Desire, Hope, Jealousy, Courage, Irresolution, Remorse, Joy, Sadness, Anger, Shame, and Regret, just to name a few. However, according to Descartes, all emotions are composed by or derived from only six primary emotions: Wonder, Love, Hatred, Desire, Joy, and Sadness – all of equal importance and strength.

When elaborating on passion in employees, I find the notion of Love, Hatred, and Desire particularly interesting, as I interpret them to refer to a more stable state of being, than that of Wonder, Joy, or Sadness. Wonder, which also entails Astonishment, is the immediate attraction to novelty, and that through a Desire to learn leads to Curiosity (Descartes 1989). The notions of Joy or Sadness, in my view, refer to more temporary states of being: One can feel Joy when aroused, or Sadness when exposed to e.g. negative feedback. When Descartes claims that these emotions are equally strong in influencing a person's volitions, it is true for the immediate actions that will either bring you closer, to or distance you, from the good or evil you are experiencing in the moment.

The same power over volition is true for Love and Hatred, although in another manner. When talking about employee passion and how it affects excellence, Love and Hatred contribute with the persistent will to respectively engage, or disengage with activity over a long (or even lifelong) period of time. Love, in other words, is to '…imagine a whole of which we think ourselves to be only one part and the thing loved another,' (Descartes 1989, p.62), whereas the opposite is true for Hatred (Descartes 1989). Looking at the concept of Love and Hatred versus that of Desire, they are admittedly very closely connected. However, the difference is that both Love and Hatred refer to a current state of being, while Desire has reference to the future. Hence, one can have a desire for love − a desire for unity, and Hatred leads to a Desire for separation from the evil.

In the context of employee passion, both Love and Hatred are beneficial. Love for our job will, through Desire, incite us to seek mastery and excellence − or 'unity' with the job in its purity. Hatred and Anger (a child of Hatred), although commonly understood as negative and destructive, and often resulting in resentment (Lazarus & Lazarus 1995), also have positive consequences. Anger can help us show, how strongly we feel about something (Lazarus & Lazarus 1995), and therefore help us convey our Loving desire for certain things. Thus, when Steve Jobs angrily and aggressively fire a member of staff in the film 'Jobs' (Stern 2013)[1], we have no doubt that it is done out of Love and deep-seated passion for excellence. And while Jobs' overt display of emotion may push some

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[1] See clip at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RWcrM5SRCQw

people away, it also contributes to the work culture an innate notion of devotion and self-sacrifice for excellence.

2.4   Arriving at a Discourse

With the philosophical and the organisational understanding of passion established, I am able to put forth the underlying discourse of this thesis. However, before doing so, I find it important to examine especially two implications of bringing Descartes into a contemporary context, namely (1) Descartes' dualistic understanding of body and soul as bearers of passion, and (2) the philosophy of rationalism versus that of affect and emotion. These two points of critique will be elaborated in the following.

2.4.1   Descartes' Dualism Revisited

While Descartes argues for a dualistic view, separating the body from the soul, and claiming the actions are always a result of volitions, more contemporary scholars within the field of neuroscience and psychology, argue that the separation is fictitious (see i.e. Damasio 2008; Dennett 1995; Frank 1988).

Damasio's research indicates feelings and emotions are not confined to art and humanities, but also to reason and rationality. Damasio argues that reasoning is not a mere cognitive process, like Descartes claims (1989), but also a result of what he calls 'somatic markers' – a bodily gut feeling, which supposedly makes decision making both more efficient and possibly more accurate by 'marking' certain options and biasing the brain towards certain alternatives (see also Cooper 2002).

When it comes to emotion versus reason, Descartes (1989) claims that man must control passion in order to act reasonably, however, Antonio Damasio (2008) and Robert H. Frank (1988) argue that acting reasonably is not possible without involving emotions and passions (see also Goleman 2006), because of the interdependence between cognition and emotions.

This leads me to the second critique of Descartes: the notion of passion and emotion conflicting with his idea of reason and rationalism.

2.4.2 Descartes' Rationalism Revisited

Descartes represents a 17th century group of philosophers often referred to as the Modern Rationalists (see Anon 2015), building their theory of science on the belief of antique rationalists like Aristotle and Plato (Holm 2011). Thus, Descartes believes 'truth' is obtained through reason and deduction rather than through empiricists' belief in induction through sensory impressions (cf. Holm 2011; Lacewing 2008; 2009; Robinson & Aronica 2010).

However, as Frank (1988, p.3) writes: 'Many actions, purposely taken with full knowledge of their consequences *are* irrational.' In the discussion of reason, Frank is joined by Niklas Luhmann who points out one of the paradoxes of rationalism. Whereas Love and other passions apply to only certain objects, reason must be universally applicable, which, according to Luhmann (1998a, p.95), is why reason can never claim absolute power: 'Universality and absolutism are mutually exclusive.' The trouble with reason and the rationalist view of Descartes lies in the understanding of where the passion comes from and in the need for justification of it. On the justification of passion, Luhmann (1998b, p.92) again comments that '…the code of passionate love does not need a moral foundation, an anchorage in the lasting guarantors of social order. It is grounded […] in the shortness of life, not in eternal life,' and possibly some of the most critical stances opposing the rationalisation of passions and emotions are presented by Linstead & Brewis (2007) in their article *Passion, Knowledge and Motivation: Ontologies of Desire*, where they work from the discourse of Bataille: 'Everything that 'justifies' our behaviour needs to be re-examined and overturned … [such thought] is the subordination of the heart, of passion, to incomplete economic calculations,' (in Linstead & Brewis 2007, p.360).

Descartes' ratiocentric bias – 'the notion that calm and detached rational analysis provides the unique key to understanding ourselves and our activities,' (Cottingham 2009, p.250) – has also been challenged by later thinkers like Freud (reviewed in Cottingham 2009; Lacewing 2008) and Kant (reviewed in Holm 2011) claiming that the human mind and passions are not as transparent as rationalist philosophers like Descartes want them to be. According to Holm (2011), Kant offers a possible solution to the quarrels between empiricists and rationalists, suggesting a differentiation between 'the world, as it is in itself ("das

Ding an sich") and the world, as it appears to us ("das Ding für uns"),' (Holm 2011, p.27, my translation).

Turning back to the distinction between intrinsic motivation and passion, the notion of rationale has special significance: Passion exists without reason, whereas motivation does not. The passionate love or hate of an object cannot be explained with reason, whereas motivation can come from the promise of a monetary reward, positive feedback from your colleagues, or a working culture of autonomy (e.g. Pink 2009; Amabile 2006).

In other words, with intrinsic motivation, the deeper emotions are absent. Just like loving your spouse, being committed to something through love (or anger for that sake) 'imposes an additional cost on [having an] affair, one that is experienced right away. Because the emotional cost [i.e. guilt] of betraying a loved person occurs in the present moment, there is at least some chance it can outweigh the immediate attraction of the affair,' (Frank 1988, p.199). In my view, the same is true for passions concerning anything else; in the face of adversity, a craftsman's passionate love for his craft outweighs the temptation or immediate desire for banishing his work and doing something else.

2.4.3   Old Wine in New Bottles

Summing up, it should be clear that I find no need of the constructed narrative of a specific form of passion concerning one's job or work. I believe that passion in an organisational setting is no different from any other passion, and therefore, need not be conceptualised in an organisational-specific manner. This is not to say that organisations have no power to encourage passion and use it for enhancing performance. It is only to emphasize that the underlying concept of human passion stays the same, no matter the contextual setting.

Hence, my conception of passion in an organisational setting is indeed old wine in new bottles: Employee passion is the employee's affective and cognitive detachment from, or attachment to, an object or activity, underpinned by emotions ranging from positive to negative. For organisations striving for excellence, it is the individual employees' Desire for mastery of, and unity with, the Loved object or activity, they must nurture. Doing so, the organisation indirectly encourages excellence, as passionate employees are more likely to engage in persistent, deliberate practise (Vallerand et al. 2010; Vallerand et al.

2008) which in turn leads to higher performance (Ericsson et al. 1993), and consequently, excellence.

2.5   Delimitations of Research

Before proceeding to the qualitative analysis of how organisations can utilise employee passion to obtain excellence, I find it necessary to comment on a significant limitation of this thesis.

When engaging with the literature on passion in organisations, one will soon meet the dichotomy of *harmonious* and *obsessive* passion (i.e. Vallerand et al. 2003; Bonneville-Roussy et al. 2013; Omorede et al. 2013; Burke et al. 2014; Donahue et al. 2012; Ratelle et al. 2004; Ho & Pollack 2014).

In short, the main difference between the two lies in the power over volition. People with harmonious passion are described to 'have a strong desire to pursue the activity, and this desire is under their control such that they can freely choose when to engage in the activity' (Ho & Pollack 2014, p.436), while obsessive passion 'entails a strong desire to engage in the activity, which is not under the person's control. It is as if the activity controlled the person,' (Philippe et al. 2010, p.918).

While it is indeed important for organisations to monitor their employees' passion with regards to the two types, the dichotomy lies beyond the scope of this thesis. The main reason for this omission is seated in the qualitative nature of this research. The respondents have been chosen not from their type of passion, but rather their position in and contribution to an organisation delivering excellence. Hence, the results of this thesis rest upon their conception of how the organisation contributes to their passion and vice versa, and not the type of passion they may have.

In the next chapter, I will elaborate on the methodological approach employed and explain and justify the collection and analysis of the data.

3 Methodology

'The greatest danger for most of us is not that our aim is too high and we miss it, but that it is too low and we reach it.'
− Michelangelo

As presented in the introduction, the aim of this thesis is to investigate *how* an organisation can use the passion of employees to secure organisational excellence. As the question is in nature explorative (hence the *how*), a qualitative research design was deemed most appropriate, as with a constructivist approach, this would allow me, as a researcher, to explore prospects I was unaware that I didn't know (Guba & Lincoln 1988).

The qualitative method allows for acquiring in-depth knowledge of the cultural phenomena and the specific world surrounding the researched subjects (Kvale 1983). In order to identify the driving forces behind employee passion and excellence, and how these are influenced by organisations, this coverage of the person-specific opinions and experiences was necessary − an explorative coverage only attainable through qualitative engagement with the research subjects.

Specifically, I have conducted 10 semi-structured interviews. The flexible structure allows for said exploration, and for pursuing details and stories, that may not have been anticipated before the interviews took place (Brown 2010). Furthermore, choosing the interview over other qualitative research methods like focus group interviews or participative observations has to do with the reliability of the research. As the research is aimed at investigating how the entire emotional spectrum is involved in the passion for excellence, and at covering the interplay between founders, leaders, and employee, I anticipated that some important details and stories that would provide crucial insight into the nature of what *impassionate* employees, might be lost with the presence of a superior. Noticeably, the argument goes both ways; the leaders may have stories and opinions they would withhold in the presence of their employees.

3.1   Empirical Data

The data collected is the result of 10 personal interviews with founders, leaders, and employees of four different companies producing excellence; two Michelin-level restaurants, an indie film company, and a rewarded business-to-business advertisement firm. Most of the interviews were held in Denmark, and were therefore conducted in Danish. The interviews lasted between 45 and 90 minutes each, and were conducted 'behind closed doors', emphasizing the full discretion towards superiors and colleagues. To retain full discretion of the interviewees, what is presented in the following analysis has been anonymized.

As the subject of the interviews was of a highly personal matter for the respondents, the interviews were structured to slowly ease into a deeper discussion of the emotions and passions of the respondent. Consequently, the opening question asked them to explain how they have come to the position they currently possess. Through clarifying questions, the interviews took on more depth, as the respondent arrived at a deeper sense of trust in their own ability to answer adequately, in my person, and in sincerity of the concealment of their answers. Because of the affective nature of the interviews, the need for empathy from the interviewer was necessary. In this sense, the interviews carry with them a large degree of subjectivity from the interviewer's side (Kvale 1992), however as the interview style focussed on 'letting the object speak' (Kvale 1992, p.8), the interviews sought objectivity, insofar as to not levy the responses to a predetermined agenda. However, recognising that uninfluenced respondents is more of a utopic thought experiment, and because 'the inter-personal interaction in the interview [can have] a decisive impact on the results,' (Kvale 1992, p.10), I find it necessary to mention two possible introductory sources of unintended biases: (1) Respondents were informed by email of the discourse of the interviews. This may have set in motion certain thoughts about how they would comply with my personal notion of passion, as the notion –and it's difference from mere motivation– was mentioned in the email[2]. In spite of sending the information, I asked the interviewees not do any specific preparation, as I believe the most honest responses would appear from non-prepared, immediate answers. (2) In order to prevent typical misunderstandings

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[2] The original (Danish) and a translated example can be found in appendix 9.1 and 9.2, respectively.

and confusions of the concept of passion (i.e. with excitement (Lawrie 1980; Descartes 1989), desire (Lawrie 1980; Descartes 1989), exclusively positive emotions (Hatfield & Sprecher 1986; Kashdan & Biswas-Diener 2015; Lawrie 1980; Frank 1988), or simply motivation (Perrewé et al. 2014; Frank 1988; Linstead & Brewis 2007), the respondents were informed of my the philosophical discourse on passion (cf. Lawrie 1980) −and its opposition to the common confusions− immediately before starting the actual interview. This might have biased the respondents to search their memory for negative experiences of passion, or overinterpret the concept leading them to dismiss stories and experiences, and assigning them to be 'mere motivation'. In processing the data, I have attempted to screen out instances of obvious confusion.

Although additional interviews would have been possible, I determined that after the 10 interviews conducted, the data added, no longer contributed to the richness of understanding, nor to the concept of passion or the drivers and killers of passion (Kvale 1992).

Interviewing founders, leaders, and employees offers the opportunity to explore passion from three different views in the organisation. The different positions in the organisation enabled me to investigate to what the individual's passion is attached, how they each employ their passion in the organisation, and how their particular passions contribute to the excellence of the organisational outcome. In the analysis I will, for the most parts, refrain from using direct quotes from the interviews, both to secure anonymity of the respondents, and in order to engage deeper with my interpretation and understanding of the symbiosis between the theory and the data. Unless otherwise noted, the analysis will provide my own interpretation of the interplay between the two.

3.2   Data Analysis and Language Complications

To classify different opinions and experiences into a manageable number of overarching categories, I processed the data with inspiration from grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin 2008; Locke 2001). Consequently, the data was first separated into 10 categories and since merged into the final four themes presented in the following analysis. Using categories enable deeper analytical

engagement and a more evidence-based formation of overarching conceptual themes, which will shed a stronger light on the main-reflections important for excellence-seeking organisations to have, in order to create, support, and retain passionate employee.

One complication in analysing the data and constructing overarching themes has to do with translation. As eight interviews were conducted in Danish and two in English, some translational issues are worth commenting on.

In order to acknowledge the findings of present research, the reader should know that the English word passion has two translations in Danish: 'passion' and 'lidenskab'. While they are close synonyms and both denote a strong interest and love for something, and both stem from a notion of suffering (e.g. the Passion of the Christ and 'at lide' translating directly into 'to suffer'), 'lidenskab' seems to have a closer relation to sexual desire (cf. Det Danske Sprog- og Litteraturselskab n.d.) than the Danish 'passion' (cf. Det Danske Sprog- og Litteraturselskab n.d.). The Danish 'passion' on the other hand is closer connected to a drive aside from, but not excluding, sexuality. In the Danish interviews, the word 'passion' rather than 'lidenskab' were used because of this difference, which in my view incidentally also reduced the risk of the common confusions, as the understanding of the Danish 'passion', is closer to the philosophical understanding of passion.

In spite of the translational issues presented, the reader should keep in mind that the purpose of the interviews was not to gain translational perfection, but rather focussed on the conveyance of ideas and appreciations of the respondents within the framework presented in the problem statement.

Hence, in the following chapter, the appreciations of passion's connection to excellence in the work place is analysed and presented.

4 Analysis

'Excellence is the result of caring more than others think is wise, risking more than others think is safe, dreaming more than others think is practical, and expecting more than others think is possible.'
– Ronnie Oldham

This chapter presents the collected data viewed through the discursive lens presented in the literature review. Reading the text with the richer understanding of passion as an employee's cognitive, and affective relationship with an object, or activity –no matter the qualities of the emotions involved– will expand and enrich organisations' and leaders' knowledge of how to benefit from employees' desire for unity with (and mastery of) their passion. A knowledge that should in turn bring organisations closer to the notion of excellence, and hence answer the problem stated in the introduction of this thesis: How can organisations use passion in producing organisational excellence?

In order to answer *how*, I will first examine how the notion of passion is present for employees in organisations of excellence (paragraph 4.1). Next, I will extricate how organisations can enhance the feeling of love by unifying the employees with their passion. The notion of unity is investigated in paragraph 4.2 and 4.3, where the former is concerned especially with passion in the present, and the latter with passion in the future. Lastly, in paragraph 4.4, I will investigate the organisation's influence on employee affection and emotional engagement connected to the workplace.

4.1   Understand Employees' Passion

'Some people care too much. I think it's called love.'
– Winnie-the-pooh, A. A. Milne

In trying to understand how employees drive excellence from their passion, we must first understand the roots of the passion itself.

4.1.1 Passions' Misunderstood Connection to Greater Purpose

One common conception is that passion occurs from the feeling of working for *a greater purpose*. From scholars (i.e. Leider 1997) and non-academics alike statements like 'it's the fact that I help other people, which drives me' seem prevalent when rationalising what drives the passion of passionate people. However, there is especially one reason why the notion of altruism as the root of passion falls apart. Understanding that passion comes from the feeling of, and desire for, unity or disunity with an object or activity, it is also understood that passion is driven by an inner attraction/repulsion, which set in motion certain feelings in the individual. Consequently, the idea of doing things *only for the sake of others*, i.e. for external reasons, seems outside the reach of rich passion. Then why do people point to *a greater purpose* as the root of their passion? The answer, I believe, comes down to the paradox of altruism (Frank 1988), and the idea of feedback and how feedback evokes certain emotional reactions. The paradox of altruism is that the good-doer seems to always have personal gains from the deed such as money, recognition, good will, or simply feeling good. Hence, rarely or never, do we see altruism where the positive is not somehow reciprocated (cf. Frank 1988). Contributing to *a greater purpose* therefore takes the role as a modifier of the external and internal feedback[3] rather than being the root of passion itself.

4.1.2 Persistent Passion for Craft and Perfection

The understanding of passion in organisations of excellence does indeed appear to correspond to the idea that passion, which fosters excellence, comes from a personal desire for unity and mastery, rather than a desire for the fortune of or for pleasing others. Although one of the drivers of emotional satisfaction undeniably comes from external sources like customers, peers etc., this feedback only appears to satisfy the emotions connected with immediateness, namely, the

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[3] External and internal feedback understood respectively as feedback, which comes from without – from peers, customers, etc. – and feedback, which comes from within – sensory, affective, and cognitive feedback from oneself to oneself.

emotions of Joy, Sadness, and Wonder. The persistent drivers of Love and Hatred appear unaffected of the immediate external feedback. Consequently, while the immediate emotions may alter the immediate actions of the employee, it is the notions of Love and Hatred that leaders must understand in order to champion persistent, deliberate practise among employees.

Understanding employees' Love and Hatred is truly two sides of the same coin. From Descartes we know that Love is the feeling (a desire) for unity, while Hatred is the distancing from the object of 'evil', but also, the hate of being separated from the object of Love. In the context of the excellent organisation, it appears that the Love and Hatred of employees are especially connected to the specific craft they perform, which consequently counteracts Zigarmi et al.'s concept of Employee Work Passion (Zigarmi et al. 2010; Zigarmi, Diehl, et al. 2011; Zigarmi, Nimon, et al. 2011). The idea that passion is connected to the craft itself seems to be true for all levels of the organisation. In emphasizing that it is the craft –not a greater purpose or the organisation itself– which is the root of the passion, a story from the world of indie-film springs to mind; a story of deep emotional engagement of the make-up artists:

> *'On one of the last days we had [a] blood-scene, where the main guy gets his throat cut and blood comes out. And you do see it, so they put a prosthetic throat on him. […] It is very very difficult to do. Very difficult! And it didn't work on the day. It completely failed. So we didn't use it in the film in the end. It was… The notion of failure was much much bigger for the make-up team than for anyone else. I was disappointed of course. Everyone was disappointed. […] But the make-up team were the ones [who were] really affected by it. Of course, I went and spoke to them afterwards and said 'you know, these things happen – it is really tough make-up to do. Don't worry about it. We will find a way to shoot it without the make-up.' But that sense of failure was just so prevalent. And for me… Of course, I wasn't pleased to see them upset, but it really shows that they care, not just about the film as a whole but specifically about what they are doing. And that is exactly how it should be.'*

While it is fairly easy to understand that employees, who are only involved in a project for a shorter period of time (like the make-up artists), are mainly driven by their love for the craft, it could seem like the passion of founders and

leaders were not directly connected to a craft, but rather to the organisation as a whole. However, it seems that even the passion of founders and leaders falls within the idea that it is the feeling, and desire, for unity with a craft that is really the root of their passion. In order to understand how founders and leaders fit into discourse, one must remember that the craft of a founder is that of entrepreneurship, and the craft of a leader is indeed leading, and encouraging other people to perform. As such, their Love is connected to those roles; the root of their passion is the desire to 'become one' with the craft of starting (and running) a company or to 'unify' with the ultimate skill of making others perform.

The connection of Passion to the love of craft, rather than externalities, is evident also in the fact that workers of the excellence-producing organisations generally agree that passions cannot be imposed or inspired from others. Indeed their passion for their craft is something independent from other peoples' opinion or influence, and is indeed irrational in its nature. As with the irrational passionate love for a person, the passionate love for the craft incites an irrationally strong emotional attachment to the craft itself, and for the activity of engaging with the craft. Engaging thus becomes autotelic, and in turn becomes (and is already) the root of the passion.

In summary, in excellent organisations, founders, leaders, and employees alike appear to be passionate about their specific craft, independently of external factors like feedback, recognition, or an artificial attachment to the organisation. Their passion, and what drives their persistent deliberate practise, is unity with their craft; complete mastery of the craft in its purity.

4.1.3   Using the Passion in Organisations

Returning to how organisations can exploit employee passions, it becomes clear that leaders must first of all understand the difference between their own passion, and the employees' passion for their specific craft. When leaders acknowledge that imposing a passion for the organisation onto employees is improbable, they can begin embracing the initiatives necessary for the employees' passion to thrive within the framework of the organisation.

Leaders must create the space for absolute emersion into the craft – what I will call 'nerdery'[4]. On an everyday basis, leaders must facilitate the conditions of Flow, and embrace that employees' passion is concerned around the goal of unifying with the craft in its purity. When searching for passionate craftsmen and –women in the employment process, leaders should look for the degree of identification with the craft and the notion of the craft being a hobby – namely something employees would do even without the ordinary rational motivational factors influencing.

Hence, the question of passion at the workplace is not a question of preserving the passion itself, as the passion is self-preserving and not influenced by externalities, but solely a question of nurturing and directing the energy of passion so that it is to the benefit of the organisation – in this sense, Zigarmi et al.'s linear work passion model (2009) has it's raison d'être.

In order to sustain profitability from the passions of the employees and secure excellence, it appears that leaders can only facilitate and cultivate employees' emotional attachment to their job and thus strengthen the passion for craft to the outcomes of the organisation.

In spite of the irrational nature of passion, in order to provide organisations with some kind of implementable knowledge, I will –rather rationally– use the following paragraphs to elaborate on the primary tools leaders should use to strengthen the relationship between individual employee passions and the workplace.

4.2   Connecting Passion and Job

My PRECIOUS!
– Gollum, The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers

Knowing that the love and desire of employees are for *unity with the craft* in particular, this leads us to examine how leaders can support and help

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[4] The Danish word 'nørderi' is created from 'nørd' (English: nerd), and refers to the activity of a nerd, i.e. nerdy (deep) interest for, and engagement into, something niche. The notion of 'nørderi' occurs in the data of all Danish interviews, hence my construction of the word 'nerdery'.

employees' to obtain this unity and still contribute to the excellence of the organisation. To extend the craft-passion to something of use to the organisation, it appears that organisations must first of all create a strong sense of ownership over the products or services that the passionate employee delivers.

In academic literature, the concept of ownership is not unknown. With scholars like Teresa Amabile (2006; 1996), Edward L. Deci & colleagues (Deci et al. 1991; Gagné & Deci 2005; Deci & Ryan 2008), Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1996; 2002) and Daniel H. Pink (2009) advocating for autonomy and delegation of responsibility, ownership is thought to be a prevalent aspect of the motivated employee of today. In motivational and creativity theories of today, ownership is concerned with fostering intrinsic motivation via the sense of autonomy or freedom over method, and while this should indeed create motivated employees, it seems not to be quite enough for employees to extend their passion onto the organisational activity. The notions of freedom and autonomy in motivational theories again appear to be of instrumental character, exemplified in Amabile's (2006, p.81) comment: 'People will be more creative […] if you give them freedom to decide how to climb a particular mountain. You needn't let them choose which mountain to climb.' Although Amabile does mention involvement of employees in goal-setting procedures, she withholds that this will not increase creativity. However, looking at passion rather than creativity or motivation, not involving employees in the goal-setting process appears to be a mistake.

4.2.1   Seating Ownership in Love

For organisations seeking excellence it appears imperative to maximise employee involvement in the entire process of excellence creation. It seems that the more involved, the more employees will consider their craft-passion, the goals of the organisation, and the products or services they create a part of the same symbioses. In this sense, the more involved the employees, the more they will Love and care for their contribution to the organisation. To exemplify with the help of Descartes (1989, p.63), the love for their contributions should be equal to a fathers' love for his children; '…a good father's Love for his children is so pure that he desires to have nothing from them, and wills neither to possess them otherwise than he does nor to be joined to them more closely than he

already is; instead, considering them each as another himself…'. With this view of ownership and (fatherly) Love of contributions, the idea of not involving employees in the goal-setting and entire process of excellence creation seems irrational, if not downright bizarre. And evidently, organisations of excellence do appear to have a higher degree of inclusion of the employees in the project and organisational goals-settings with even the person of lowest rank having the possibility to state her opinion on all matters of the organisation and excellence creation process. Additionally, organisations of excellence appear to highly valuate the employees understanding of the entire creational process, as it seems to make it easier for employees to identify −and thus (fatherly) unify− with their contributions, leading to higher performance. This point was nicely illustrated in one of the interviews:

> '…*So this entire process of creating. And even better when we take [the employees] out to see [the farm] where asparagus grow, and that [the farmer] takes care of them the entire winter, and then hands them over to us very carefully. Then [the employees] won't treat them like nothing[5] […] and break off 50 per cent. They're more likely to stroke [the asparagus] gently and fiddle with them nicely and easily[6].*'

For this organisation, involving employees in all steps of the creation of excellence −even the steps outside of the individual employee's contribution− induce a profound sense of respect for each step of the production line. Knowing the origins and 'upbringing' of the product or service, indeed, resembles the father's knowledge of his children, hence leading to 'a father's love' for the organisational outcome, and consequently making employees care, like a father, for the success and excellence of the outcome. Underpinning the care and love with detailed knowledge additionally serves the purpose of fulfilling the need of nerdery; obtaining detailed knowledge, not for the sake of others, but for the sake of knowing.

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[5] Translated from: '…står heller ikke og horer med dem…'.
[6] Translated from: 'De står nærmest bare og aer dem og piller ved dem ligeså stille,'

4.2.2   Love is Trust

While engaging employees in all processes of the organisation and production of excellence mobilises their passion for the craft onto eventually emotionally caring and feeling ownership for the quality and performance of the final outcome, setting in motion this symbiosis also requires satisfying employees' cognitive appreciation of them being involved. Fulfilling this and underpinning the sense of ownership, organisations of excellence seem to put emphasis on one trait in particular: Trust.

Although the feeling of being entrusted also sets in motion affective processes, the notion of trust seems to be so prevalent for workers in the excellent organisations, that it takes up a big part in their conscious mind. The cognitive qualities of experiencing trust seem to stem from employees' knowledge of what is their expected (and maybe even formal) responsibility, and skill level, in contrast to what is required of them. In other words, if you are not given the responsibility you are entitled to (because of skills or formal agreements) −or if it is taken away from you− you will feel overruled and untrusted, which especially for passionate people, will lead to vigorous emotional outbursts. On the other hand, if you are given more responsibility than your formal agreements −and it is still within the reach of your capabilities (see: challenge versus skill in Csikszentmihalyi 2002; Amabile 2006)− you take cognitive notice, which in turn ignites the emotions and makes you feel proud. While violating the sense of responsibility will distance the employee from the organisational outcome, the latter example of excessive trust will make employees want to invest even stronger emotions in their job, serving to create a finer knit between their passion and the organisational outcome.

Entrusting employees excessively therefore not only serves their immediate experience of flow (Csikszentmihalyi 2002), but also creates a profound and persistent sense of veneration (Descartes 1989), pride (Descartes 1989), and ownership − a sense of ownership that will be comparable to that of the founders.

Turning back to the question of how leaders and organisations can support employees in obtaining unity with their passion, it appears that the job of organisations is to encourage employees to include their job, the project, and the organisational goals into their passion. Organisations must rely on a

profound sense of trust in order to underpin employees' feeling of ownership over organisational outcomes. Establishing a deep-seated sense of being trusted, organisations should pay close attention to not overruling employees' areas of responsibility but rather grant them with responsibilities atop 'their pay grade'. Together with the sense of trust, a deep involvement into organisational goals and procedures of excellence-creation enhances the employees' Love for their contribution and the organisational outcome as a whole −hence transfer a part of their passion for the craft onto caring for the excellence of the outcome.

4.3   Closing in on Complete Union

> *'I wasn't there to conduct. Any fucking moron can*
> *wave his arms and keep people in tempo. I was there*
> *to push people beyond what's expected of them'*
> *− Fletcher, Whiplash (Chazelle 2014)*

While the former paragraphs have largely been concerned with connecting the passion to the organisation, this paragraph will examine how organisations can sustain and develop not only the employees' passionate attachment to the workplace, but also increase performance in the strive for perfection.

Sustaining passions' connection to the workplace, in large, means that organisations must continuously help employees feel ever closer to the ultimate goal: complete union with their craft in its purity. This goal, of course, is of a fictitious kind. Unity with the craft in its purity is an unattainable goal, as no matter how skilled one may become, mastery in its purity is a philosophical thought. A craft can always be perfected further, and a craft will always be subject to the possibility of development. It is also here, that another difference between motivation and passion occurs. Motivation has obtainable goals, whereas passion does not. However, the impossibility of reaching the goal also facilitates the possibility of a never-ending spiral of skill development and performance improvement. In other words, the desire for even closer unity with the object of Love (the craft) will −if treated right− ever-continuingly be satisfied. In order to start the spiral of closing in on complete union, organisations,

therefore, must facilitate the skill-improvement of employees – they must facilitate learning.

Looking to organisations of excellence, it seems their focus on learning, development, and pushing people *beyond what's expected of them* is an ingrained part of their organisation. The organisations consciously practise, perfect, and discover new ideas and ways of doing things. They constantly search for inspiration from others within their field and get excited over the innovations of others – colleagues and competitors alike. Although this appears to be a general part of their culture, the specific job of leaders is exactly pushing people, and challenging employees' skills within their craft. Hence, leaders must create an environment with more focus on development processes than on 'command-and-control initiatives' (Zigarmi, Nimon, et al. 2011, p.213).

4.3.1   The Challenge of Passion and Performance

Looking again at the more temporary state of happiness during work, flow, Csikszentmihalyi (2002) too advocates for challenging employees to continuously develop their skills. In sustaining the experience of flow, leaders should balance and continuously rebalance the challenge with the skills of the employees – keeping employees' inside the 'flow channel' (Csikszentmihalyi 2002, p.74). By ensuring employees' state of flow, organisations will actively help employees feel that they are getting closer to mastery of the craft. A feeling which largely seems to come from a cognitive benchmarking of ones newer and older work, leading to appreciation of ones development and closing in on 'complete unity' with the craft.

In remembering that passion in the workplace is no different from the passions outside the workplace, a simple analogy can here be drawn to the world of dating and partnership. Neither the idea of flow (Csikszentmihalyi 2002), nor the notion of wanting to develop, is unknown to the domain of dating. In dating, as in learning from your work, the notion of Wonder has strong powers over how attracted we are to a person (Lichenberg 2013). Or in turn, how strong is our desire for Love and unity. For employees passionate about their craft, the same notion of Wonder appears to be prevalent. Employees producing excellence are indeed attracted by getting to know new aspects of their craft, and to find out in fine detail every bit there is to know.

Importantly, the attraction and attention to detailed knowledge seems not to come from expectations of the surroundings, but from a desire to know, just for the sake of knowing. Essentially, most of the details are superfluous if the organisations were to deliver even very high quality, but seems to provide the employees with that extra bit of holistic understanding, which will ensure they are capable of delivering the excellent experience.

The evident desire for detailed knowledge, and thus mastery, seems to be an active driver of the deliberate practise as mentioned by Ericsson et al. (1993). Hence, for organisations seeking excellence, supporting employees in their search for detail and, to use the words of the respondents, desire for 'nerdery', they must provide the facilities for employees to explore the depth of their passion. The quest for excellence thus becomes a quest for nerdery.

In organisations delivering excellence two things connected to idea of learning and development appear to have strong influences on the work culture: (1) excess of resources and (2) high levels of affective feedback.

As the 'excess of resources' is a matter often referred to by contemporary creativity and motivational scholars (see Amabile 2006; Csikszentmihalyi 1996; also reviewed in Pink 2009), I will refrain from elaborating this subject further than noticing that organisations of excellence seem to dedicate extra time and resources for learning and development of skills, allowing for experience through trial and error.

The feedback however, I do consider important to elaborate, as 'finding your Element often requires the aid and guidance of others,' (Robinson & Aronica 2010, p.174). Feedback from superiors, colleagues, and others within the field, then, will serve the roles of what Robinson & Aronica calls 'the mentor': recognition, encouragement, facilitation, and stretching. While the former three seem without difference across organisations, a peculiar difference seems to appear with the notion of 'stretching'.

4.3.2   Feedback with Feeling

While scholars on leadership have, in the last decade or two, underscored the importance of positive emotions and positive psychology (among others, see Linstead & Brewis 2007), both contemporary scholars (George & Zhou 2002; Sparrow 2006; West & Sacramento 2006; Kashdan & Biswas-Diener 2015) and

present research, point to feedback that solely use positive emotions is not sufficient for organisations of excellence, who wish to use the full potential of employees. In these organisations the culture seems to be more inclusive and accepting of emotions from the entire emotional spectrum, in order to stretch the abilities of the employees. Although there seems to be a consensus that feedback using positive emotions helps develop a constructive and positive work culture, feedback using negative emotions is neither dismissed as damaging for the mutual trust and respect, nor as destructing the passionate culture. It seems that as long as the critical feedback is professional and not personal, strong negative emotions like anger and even aggression, only serves to underline a leader's affection and passion for the work – just like in Steve Jobs example. This, of course, is not to say that negativity is preferable over more positive ways of giving feedback, but as long as one refrains from attacking the persons themselves, negativity does indeed appear to help us convey strong emotional attachments (cf. Lazarus & Lazarus 1995). Consequently, it is not as much the manner of delivering the feedback, but to a larger degree, the fact that feedback is given that serves to satisfy the desire for learning. Hence, Csikszentmihalyi's (1996, p.57) findings about creative people being 'likely to be both aggressive and cooperative, either at the same time or at different times,' appears to apply to passionate and excellence-seeking workers as well – however, the reader should notice that this conclusion is as well drawn on research of 'creative people' (cf. chapter 3). In one of the interviews, an example of both aggressive feedback, and the acceptance of the tone and emotional involvement were especially evident:

> *'One thing, I would like people to know[7], […] Many people were outraged that time, when [the owner, René Redzepi, in a documentary on his double Michelin-restaurant 'Noma'] got angry and yelled at people. But […] I think, not many people have that amount of passion in their bodies, as when you really feel like you are risking your entire life…'*

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[7] Translated from: 'En ting som jeg godt kunne tænke mig, der kommer lidt ud, i hvert fald,' which literally means 'One thing that I would like came out a bit.'

In drawing conclusions on how organisations can sustain and develop employees' passionate attachment to the workplace and simultaneously increase performance, organisations should focus on cultivating the individual's desire for nerdery, and for detailed knowledge of his/her craft. Letting employees emerge themselves in technicalities and meticulous nerdery also allows them to explore the depth of their passion, and indeed serve to increase the feeling of Love and unity with their craft. Although allowing for being this meticulous will take up resources, it seems that the investment helps employees associate the workplace with their passion, and consequently makes the workplace benefit from the employee's thorough understanding of their job, as well as their deliberate practise for excellence.

To push people to develop, and thus ignite emotions of Wonder, Joy and Sadness, organisations should incorporate systems of feedback, whether they be formalised or not, so the employees will get others' take on their work, and thereby develop further. Sincerely passionate leaders should not refrain from utilizing the entire emotional spectrum (from ecstasy to aggression) when offering feedback, however, in order to retain trust and good spirits, naturally feedback should never concern the person him/herself, but be strictly on the work at hand.

The next paragraph shall examine the importance of nurturing the organisational culture in order to allow for such emotional and passionate commitment to excellence.

4.4   Encourage Emotional Engagement

'When the bird of the heart begins to sing, too often
will reason stop up her ears,'
– Hans Christian Andersen

As it has been established, in order for organisations to exploit the passions of the employees, they must first recognise that their passions are for the craft. Secondly, they should induce a strong sense of ownership, so as to transfer the passion onto the organisational activities. Thirdly, they should establish systems of feedback and learning, which will ensure employees

continuously increasing performance, and hence feel more unified with their craft. At this moment, we need to understand the cultural settings organisations have to create, in order for the necessary emotional engagement to occur, without which, none of the former themes would be possible. As Hans Christian Andersen remarks, indeed cognitive reason *will* stall passion if the passion is thought to be unreasonable. When passion tells you to engage with all your emotions, reason might tell you to spare yourself from the potential of agony or that 'it is not normal' to engage in the activity with such strong enthusiasm, vigour, and nerdery.

4.4.1   The Power of Culture

For passion to survive and flourish into excellence, we need something to approve of our nerdery and to allow for your passionate engagement. For this purpose, we look to our surroundings, which is where the culture and cultural narrative comes into play. The culture and the cultural narrative have an important influence on how employees perceive their allowances with regard to what is okay and what is not (Schein 1991). The culture of an organisation created by the stories and narratives told by the people (field) within the organisation (Csikszentmihalyi 2006), and will be amended according to who contributes to the narratives (Hall 1990; 1997a; 1997b). Hence, culture is a construction of the people participating in it and consequently, 'culture [becomes] a system of permissions', (Robinson & Aronica 2010, p.148).

When looking to organisations excelling because of employee passion, it appears that paying close attention to the work atmosphere and system of cultural permissions is especially important. As passions are in nature unreasonable, in order for employees to feel secure pursuing them, they must feel a profound support surrounding their nerdery of the craft. Hence, in organisations of excellence relying on individual employee passions there appears to be a profound sense of camaraderie and team spirit. The notion of togetherness seems to provide the needed acceptance of passionate engagement, consequently allowing the pursuing of passions to leave the solitude of a corner in the attic, and enter full daylight. Nurturing a culture that allows for passionate and deep emotional engagement, nerdery, and desire for unity with

the craft then serves to provide a space, where irrationally pursuing our passions becomes the norm, not the deviant behaviour.

And indeed, in organisations of excellence, the culture seems to have a strong sense of acceptance and even appraisal of nerdery, Love, overt Joy, Sadness, or Anger. The culture appears to cherish passionate emotional engagement and near-fanatic striving for mastery and excellence; in a Michelin kitchen, the Head Chef might be shouting because of lack of quality; in the advertisement bureau intense emotions may show at a briefing; or at the film set, intimate physical and emotional connections are required to reach maximum performance.

4.4.2   Empathy Decides Performance – Not Skill

When it comes to creating this sort of passion-accepting culture, it seems that organisations of excellence rely heavily on not just the proficiencies and skills of their employees, but on 'softer' personal qualifiers like empathy and friendliness. Although skills are undeniably important, it seems that for organisational excellence to occur, the extremity of employee skills come second to 'liking' people. The reason behind this may be that in order for organisations to excel, it is less the skills of the individuals, and more the combined skills of the entire staff, which result in organisational excellence. An amicable culture, therefore, is more important for the trust, and hence the performance in the organisation, than individual proficiencies. And to arrive at a trustworthy culture of acceptance, leaders must acknowledge the obvious fact that 'we *like* empathic people and are more likely to favor them with our trust,' (Frank 1988, p.67), and should therefore focus on creating an empathic atmosphere at the workplace. This said, the reader should notice that an empathic culture is by no means equal to a culture of *sympathy*, which allows only for positive emotions. In organisations of excellence, empathy is more a question of flexibility, understanding, and helpfulness – not a question of accepting lack of engagement or quality.

For organisations it can be very hard to foster the right culture. Because, in the same way that culture influences people, it is also a product of the people themselves; in other words 'culture is therefore something that is always already existing and (re)emerging from and for the people using and creating it,' (Svold

2014, p.11). Because of this, the culture of a workplace can be very hard to change for leaders and managers coming from outside the employee-culture. And looking at the present research, the evident culture of passion may also be a result of the culture of the craft or sector – as one respondent remarks: 'It just kind of comes with the territory, right?' Nonetheless, for organisations to produce excellence, it seems that high degrees of person-work-fit is necessary.

4.4.3   Levying the Culture

One powerful tool leaders of organisations delivering excellence appear to exploit is the recruitment process. For leaders to levy the culture into being a passionate one, employers seem to consider the individual candidates' passion for the craft already in the recruitment process (also in Ho et al. 2011). Although this consideration is not one that is overly conscious, organisations and employers do indeed test the passion of applicants. When testing, they test for two things. Unknowingly, they test the applicants desire for perfection of their skills and craft, and more deliberately they test the applicants' person-work-fit, in the sense of fitting into the culture and team.

The subconscious test of applicant's passion has to do with how the applicants use their spare time. While other organisations may employee people who professionally fit into the role, and whose personality is secondary, organisations of excellence seem also in the recruitment process to have the opposite view. And while ordinary organisations often *do* ask applicants for their interests outside the job, employers in organisations of excellence appear to expect the interests outside the job, to be their passion –and thus the job– itself. In this sense, the notion of the job being their hobby becomes prevalent.

The second test of fitting into the team is just as important when assembling or adding to a passionate team. Finding the right people here serves the important purpose of preserving and guarding the culture of acceptance of nerdery, profound Love for the craft, and the wish for development. Where 'the right people' may in ordinary organisations denote people with sufficient skills and who are friendly, for organisations of excellence it seems the necessary interpersonal relations have stronger traits of Love and affection. Hence, these organisations rely on family, or very close friends, when employing. And when employing from outside this sphere, they actively work on building a sense of the

team being a family – which seem to provide the needed trust, respect, emotional engagement and idea that the workplace is the place where one safely and free of judgements can pursue, and in collaboration with others, develop the Love and passion for unity with the craft.

5 Discussion

The purpose of this thesis has been to examine how organisations can use employee passion in producing excellent outcome. The thesis rests especially upon two a priori conceptions, I here wish to discuss and defend. The first conception I will discuss, is the notion of job passion and work passion being superfluous, and that the philosophical understanding of passion will provide a better understanding of the forces behind employee engagement and excellence. The second conception I believe needs to be scrutinised, is the foundational idea of passion being necessary for excellence, and whether organisations are better of without. This conception will be discussed in paragraph 5.2.

5.1   Is the Philosophical Passion Sufficient?

In the thesis, I argue that the concepts of 'job passion' and 'work passion' are superfluous. My argument is that passion is the result of an irrational affective and cognitive, emotionally rich relation to an object or activity, and that passions are personal and will not be amended because of external leverage. I argue that the Love for an activity or object is the feeling of being in complete unity with it, and that the desire to reach that goal is what drives people. This definition of passion relies on a philosophical discourse largely presented by Descartes (1989), Lawrie (1980), and Linstead & Brewis (2007).

Scholars writing from a business and organisational discourse on the other hand argue for a different perspective on passion, namely that of 'job passion' (i.e. Ho et al. 2011) and 'work passion' (i.e. Zigarmi et al. 2009). These understandings seem to be the result of a need for a pragmatic, operational (also cf. Zigarmi et al. 2009), and measurable definition of the passion of employees. Although there are differences in the degree of instrumentality of the two concepts –job passion and work passion– where the latter, in my view, presents a discourse on passion representing solely the perspective of the operating organisation, they have in common the fundamental idea that employee passion should be (1) positive and (2) somehow beneficially connected to the

organisation. Hence, the definition of job passion entails a 'strong, intense liking for and enjoyment of the job,' (Ho et al. 2011, p.28), while work passion equally entails a 'persistent, emotionally positive, state of wellbeing stemming from the reoccurring cognitive, and affective appraisals of various jobs and organisations that result in consistent, constructive work intentions and behaviours,' (Zigarmi et al. 2009, p.310, italics removed).

While these definitions of passion may be preferable for organisations due to the operational and linear rational models, which ease measurement of organisational efforts, they appear to be insufficient. Their insufficiencies resides in the notion of appreciation or 'liking' of the job; the idea of passion leading to deliberate practise; and their linking passion to the workplace.

Firstly, from the present research, it seems that although it would often be the case, liking the job and the activities connected to it, are not necessarily an indication of whether one is passionate or not. It seems that one can have a profound passion for what they are doing, while only enjoying a minute number of the activities involved. It seems here to be more the general idea of what one is creating, rather than the actual activities and jobs involved in making them. In the philosophical understanding of passion, the aspect of 'liking' has been removed as the underlying factor – and is consequently expressing the historical meaning of the word 'passion': 'suffer' (Oxford University Press 2015). In the philosophical view, 'liking' –or even loving– is treated as a factor equal to those of 'disliking' or 'hating', whom all ignite emotions, which in turn contributes to the persistence of passion. Hence, the philosophical understanding of passion has no preference to negative or positive emotions, and therefore seems more suitable in covering passions, which are not held up by the liking of activities.

Secondly, defining employee passions solely from positive emotions and experiences seems to conflict with the idea of passion being a driver of deliberate practise (Ericsson et al. 1993; Bonneville-Roussy et al. 2011), which proves to be a fundamental player for passion leading to excellence. Certainly, a passion for motorsports does not in itself make the next Michael Schumacher. In spite of talent and access to domain and field (Csikszentmihalyi 2006), long hours of persistent deliberate practise separates the good from the excellent (Ericsson et al. 1993). Yet again, while deliberate practise leads to positive results, the practise itself 'can be demanding, repetitive, and not always inherently

enjoyable,' (Vallerand et al. 2007, p.512). Passion may even be outright painful (Linstead & Brewis 2007), and consequently conflicting with the concepts of job and work passion.

Thirdly, the linking of employees' passion to the job or the work place seems to be falsified by my research. In contrast, a person's passion seems to be independent of the work place or indeed of the influence of others (see also Luhmann 1998b on passionate love). Hence, even a job without autonomy, trust, and activities designed for development, does not seem to kill passion. Instead, jobs or workplace cultures lacking these fundamental features appear to miss the opportunity to include employee passions in their striving for quality and excellence – thus not affecting the passion itself, but rather affecting whether the workplace will benefit from the passion or not. In the definitions of job and work passion, there seems to be no room for this observation, and for the fact that if a person changes workplace to a more open-minded one, their passion may find its way to that organisation – hence it was never killed, just excluded from the context of the (former) job. Evidently, instead of connecting the employee passion to a particular job or work place, the passion seems to be connected to the idea of being in unity with the object or activity of the passion: the craft.

In conclusion, when examining passion as a driver for excellence, I do indeed find the constructed concepts of job and work passion insufficient and superfluous, while viewing passion through the philosophical lens offers a more encompassing, inclusive, and accurate comprehension of the passion necessary to understand the drivers of excellence. This remark leads to the discussion of the actual necessity of passion.

5.2   Is Passion Required?

A foundational idea behind this thesis is that passion is required when organisations want to attain excellence. But is this fundamental idea even true? The question, I believe, is a valid one, for, as research on obsessive passion has proven, passion can as well be destructive, and on account of things such as wellbeing (Vallerand et al. 2008), interpersonal relations (Philippe et al. 2010), and the over-all quality of life (cf. Ratelle et al. 2004; Vallerand 2010). Truly,

organisations need to weigh the need for passion against the level of quality they strive for. Although I, in the introduction, claim that the demand for excellence is on the rise, the demand for even mediocre products and services –sold at desirable prises– is growing as well. However, if excellence is deemed necessary for attaining the organisational goals, I do believe passion to be a vital factor. And if we ignore the irrationality of passion, and work from a premise that one could turn her passion on or off, I still believe passion for the majority to be a force of the good. For as far as harmonious passion goes, I am of the same belief as Robinson & Aronica (2010, p.21): 'When people are in their Element, they connect with something fundamental to their sense of identity, purpose, and well-being.' The 'Element' understood as having found your passion. This belief is backed by several scholars who point to the positive effects on i.e. employee well-being (Philippe et al. 2009; Vallerand et al. 2008).

Coming back to the question of passion being necessary for excellence, again Vallerand and colleagues (Vallerand et al. 2007; Bonneville-Roussy et al. 2011; Vallerand et al. 2008) have done extensive studies pointing to passion's positive influence on performance. This influence seems, in large part, to be the result of persistent deliberate practise, rather then pure talent (Ericsson et al. 1993). The question then becomes 'what drives persistent deliberate practise?' – a question also asked by other scholars (i.e. Ericsson & Charness in Vallerand et al. 2007). To this question, Vallerand et al. (2007) proposes passion to be that which provides people with the required energy and persistence to engage in prolonged deliberate practise. From the discursive position of this thesis, the proposal seems likely. The view of passion being an energy not biased by reason seems compatible with the idea of passion being the driver of prolonged engagement – just as true passionate Love for your spouse, at least from a romantic point of view, incites prolonged and imperishable emotional engagement, and longing for complete oneness.

So indeed passion *does* seem to be important when striving for what is above high quality. Passion (through practise) *does* separate the good from the best. And thus businesses seeking true excellence should consider employee passion when building their organisation.

6 Conclusion

Concluding the thesis, I will turn back to the beginning and again ask, 'how can organisations use passion in producing organisational excellence?'

While contemporary theories on motivation (reviewed in Pink 2009) offer great advice on igniting the intrinsic motivation in employees, they are not concerned with deep seated irrational passions, which is seen in organisations delivering excellence. Likewise, contemporary theories on passion in organisations (e.g. Zigarmi, Diehl, et al. 2011; Ho et al. 2011), which appear to largely resemble those of intrinsic motivation, seem to be written from a highly instrumental discourse, working with rational causalities and defining the concept of passion from an organisational utilitarian stance. In order to embrace the individuality and irrationality of passion, this thesis proposes a different definition of passion. One that is based on a philosophical discourse (cf. Descartes 1989; Lawrie 1980; Linstead & Brewis 2007), where is not restrained to positive emotions or constricted to organisational or job matters. Rather, it is viewed as energy controlled by emotions and which can be directed into volitions – be they good or bad, positive or negative. Hence, emotions of Love, Hatred, Desire, Wonder, Joy, or Sadness (Descartes 1989) have equal powers over the passion, and are equal in strength over volitions. The latter three are interpreted as emotions inciting immediate actions, the former three incite long-term commitments.

With this understanding of passion, it becomes clear that an employee's Loving passion is for the craft, not the organisation. The desire of the employee hence becomes to be in 'complete unity' with the craft in its purity (cf. Descartes 1989), and the emotions underpinning this desire are found on the entire emotional palette (Old Wine in New Bottles, paragraph 2.4.3)

Consequently, rather than measuring employees' passion for the workplace or job, organisations should focus on facilitating and nurturing the individual passions of the employees – in other words help them closer to the idea of unity with the craft. Doing so is hypothesised to (cf. Vallerand et al.

2007), through persistent deliberate practise (see i.e. Ericsson et al. 1993), benefit the organisation with outcomes of excellence, as employees passionately engaging in deliberate practise will outperform those who do not passionately engage (Bonneville-Roussy et al. 2011; Vallerand et al. 2007).

With the discourse established, the thesis proceeds to analyse the interviews. Despite the conception of passions as irrational, the result of this analysis put forward four overarching, rather rational, ideas to which organisations can look when wanting create fertile grounds for employee passions to flourish.

First of all, the research supports the notion of passion being something inherently personal and outside the influence of the organisations. Employees are first and foremost passionate about their craft, no matter the nature of their craft. A craft as such both include actual physical work and i.e. the craft of making others perform − the craft of leadership. The notion of Love for craft is therefore not only *similar to*, but *is in reality* the exact same Love as one might have for e.g. a person or an idea. The passionate desire for the craft therefore, *is* the loving and passionate desire for mastery of, and unity with, the craft − something not necessarily including the organisation.

Secondly, in order for organisations to transfer employees' passion for their craft onto the outcome of the organisation, they should impose a deep sense of employee ownership over the outcome of the organisations. This implies early involvement and thorough knowledge and influence on the decision. Although the idea of ownership is also prevalent from multiple motivational theories (reviewed in Pink 2009), the ownership required for employee passion to spill over on products must be one that extends the feeling of Loving unity to the product itself − hence, the employee must feel 'a fathers' Love' for the products. They must consider the products and extension of their very own selves.

Thirdly, the research suggests that in order for employees to continuously connect their passion with the workplace, the workplace must continuously assist employees' in getting closer to unity with the craft. In operational terms, this means facilitating systems of learning and feedback, which in turn will develop the skills of the employees, consequently making them feel more unified with the craft. In facilitating these developmental activities, the organisations

should remember that it is the employees' passion for their craft that should be in focus – not organisational goals or strategies. Furthermore, the research and discourse agree with scholars advocating for using the entire emotional spectrum when providing feedback. While a positive tone do indeed foster positive development, so does a negative one, as such a tone can help underscore one's emotional engagement and passionate Love for the object of activity. Needless to say, especially negative feedback should be focussed strictly on professional matters – not personal.

Fourthly, organisations seeking excellence from employee passion should understand that rationality often kills passion, as the impassioned person will often assume being passionate as an oddity. Organisations should, therefore, provide a place and culture of acceptance, with regards to nerdery and deep emotional engagement. Actively working to secure trust and acceptance of nerdery will provide the employee with a space to engage with their passionate desire for unity with the craft, and thus lead to organisational excellence.

In essence this thesis proposes that organisations seeking excellence, rather than focussing on motivational factors, should focus on making employees Love the outcome of the organisation as much as they Love their craft.

In the following paragraph, I will identify some of the practical implications connected to the findings, and propose topics for further research.

7 Practical Implications & Further Research

The purpose of this paragraph is to highlight some of the practical implications that might follow, when using the recommendations of the thesis. In addition, suggestions for future research are given.

The first implication is connected to the notion of resources and value. While the thesis claims that organisations should allocate resources for employees to indulge themselves in the nerdery of their passion, this is without recognising that most organisations have only limited resources for what this sort of research and development. Further research on the topic could, therefore, investigate how organisations find a satisfactory balance between the nerdery that is value creating for the organisation and that, which is unnecessary meticulosity.

The second implication has to do with the foundational culture associated with a certain craft or education. While the research suggested high levels of passion in the workplace in general, the same might not be true for other industries. Notably, the present research is conducted within the creative economy, which is often depicted with high levels of passion and emotional engagement (see i.e. Catmull & Wallace 2014; Stern 2013; Gramstrup 2013; Chazelle 2014). Further research could therefore investigate the applicability of the present findings in a 'non-creative' context.

The third implication is concerned with the notions of harmonious and obsessive passion, and how organisations can enhance the former, and secure distance to the latter. Further research should examine how the suggested focus points play into the notions of obsessive and harmonious passion, and qualify the findings against the dichotomistic discourse.

The last practical implication I will comment on is the issue concerning team size and the interpersonal proximity. In the present research, the teams involved never exceeded 10 people. With such a small number of people in the

teams, one major factor in producing excellence could be combined with knowing each other intimately. Consequently, further research is needed to know whether the discourse and the findings of this thesis are as well applicable on larger teams, of say, 50 or 100 people.

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9 Appendix

9.1   Original Introductory E-mail (Danish)

Kære [Respondent 1] og [Respondent 2]

Som aftalt, sender jeg lige lidt information om, hvad mit specialeprojekt handler om.

I bund og grund handler projektet om passion. Jeg er meget optaget af, hvordan man som passioneret leder inspirerer sine medarbejdere til også at arbejde passioneret. Som jeg kort fortalte [Respondent 1], sondrer jeg imellem at være *motiveret* og være *passioneret*. I min optik ligger der bag *motivation* en høj grad af rationale, hvorimod *passion* kan være fuldstændigt irrationelt. Passion henvender sig derfor til en dybere drivkraft hos mennesker, og leder derfor ofte til mere innovative løsninger og langt højere kvalitet.

Jeres involvering

Jeg har derfor været på udkig efter virksomheder med passionerede ledere og medarbejdere, og som jeg fortalte [Respondent 1], kan jeg kun forestille mig, at én af Aarhus og Danmarks bedste [virksomhedstype] er den perfekte case for mig. Jeg håber derfor, at **én af jer har lyst til at deltage i et interview på ca. en time**, og at jeg kan få mulighed for at snakke med **2-3 af jeres medarbejdere** (både [ledere] og [ansatte] er interessante), ligeledes maks. én time pr. person. I rapporten vil udtalelser fra enkeltpersoner blive anonymiseret, og kun på respondenternes eget ønske vil deres navne fremgå af rapporten. Da jeg er udrejst fra d. 17. juni, håber jeg meget, at interviewene kan foregå inden da. Alle dage vil passe mig.

Til projektet har jeg allerede interviewet [virksomhed 1], [virksomhed 2] og vil muligvis udvide projektet med [virksomhed 3]. Jeg sigter efter 9-11 interviews alt i alt.

Kort om mig

Jeg er 26 år gammel og er ved at færdiggøre min Master ved Kingston University i London. Her har jeg studeret linjen 'Managing in the Creative Economy'. Uddannelsen har i høj grad fokuseret på, hvordan kreative og innovative processer styrkes, og hvordan man motiverer kreative mennesker – kreative forstået i bred forstand og ikke kun som kunstneriske. Jeg blev inspireret til at skrive om passion på arbejdspladsen, da det var tydeligt for mig, at perfektion, ekspertise og produkter af højeste kvalitet – på tværs af brancher –

næsten altid udspringer fra mennesker med en dyb passion for det, de laver. De normale motivationsteorier, man lærer på handelshøjskoler verden over, er i mine øjne derfor ufuldstændige – de mangler det irrationelle aspekt.

Det var en lang smøre, men jeg tænkte, det var rart for jer at vide lidt om mine tanker. Jeg håber meget, vi kan arrangere de fornødne interviews og ser meget frem til at høre fra jer. Jeg kan selvfølgelig træffes på denne e-mail eller på telefon.

Venlig hilsen, og på forhånd tak

Mikkel Svold
MA Managing in the Creative Economy
Kingston University, London

9.2   Translated Introductory E-mail (English)

Dear [Respondent 1] and [Respondent 2]

As we agreed, I'm sending a bit of information about what the project of my dissertation is about.

In essence, the project is about passion. I am very interested in how an impassionate leader inspires the employees to work passionately as well. As I briefly told [Respondent 1], I'm differentiating between being *motivated* and being *passionate*. I my view, behind *motivation* is a large degree of rationality, whereas *passion* can be completely irrational. Passion therefore turns to a deeper driving force in people, and therefore often leads to more innovative solutions and far greater quality.

Your Involvement

Consequently, I have been on the lookout for companies with passionate leaders and employees, and as I told [Respondent 1], I can only imagine that one of the best [company-type]'s in Aarhus and Denmark is the perfect case for me. I therefore hope that **one of you would like to participate in an interview of approx. one hour**, and that I may have the opportunity to talk to **2-3 employees** (both [managers] and [employees] are of interest), also lasting maximum one hour per person. In the report, statements[8] from the individuals will be anonymized and only on the request of the respondents themselves will their name appear in the report. As I am out of the country from June 17 I sincerely hope that the interviews can take place before this date. Every day suits me.

For the project I have already interviewed [company 1], [company 2] and will possible extend the project with [company 3]. I aim for 9-11 interviews all in all.

Briefly about Me

I am 26 years old and am currently finishing my Masters degree at Kingston University in London. Here, I have studied 'Managing in the Creative Economy'. The course have largely focussed on how creative and innovative processes are strengthened, and how you motivate creative people – creative understood in a wider sense and not only as artistic. I was inspired to write about passion in the workplace as I was clear to me that perfection, expertise, and products of the highest quality – across sectors – nearly always springs from people with a profound passion for what they are doing. The normal

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[8] Translated from 'udtalelser', which could also be translated with 'quotes' or 'opinions'.

motivational theories, you learn at business schools across the world, are in my view therefore incomplete – they lack the irrational aspect.

This was a long explanation, but I thought it would be nice for you to know a bit about my thoughts. I truly hope we can arrange the necessary interviews and look very much forward to hearing from you. I can of cause be contacted through this e-mail-address or by phone.

Best regards and thanks

Mikkel Svold
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9.3   Example of Interviewer–Respondent Interaction

Interviewer	I think we should start by you telling your story; how did you end up in this company, and why are you in the position you now employ?
Respondent	Well, if we go all the way back to the beginning, then I graduated high school, majoring in math, and I though I was going to do a higher education in music and make music. But that turned out otherwise. So I ended up with an interest in psychology.
I	Is it still psychology that interests you?
R	Yes! Creating the framework for employees who can then thrive with their creative personalities, where the output will increasingly become better and better. […]
I	What do you mean? How do you do that?
R	For example, right now we're doing a lot of training. That's something I came up with. […]
I	What are the employees thinking about the training?
R	They all excited about it! And it's not just the creatives, it's everyone!

[…]

I	At work, can you feel that some people are really on working with passion? Is there a difference from being passionate and motivated?
R	Yes, there is. For some people, it's a calling. […]
I	Do you think the creatives are passionate about their craft or about the company?
R	Many of them are around the craft. Also more than you'd find in other sectors. Many of them would nerd on into the evening. […]
I	Do you think that's important?
R	Yes, I believe so. Normally we say that you can have a job, a career, or a calling. I believe you need a calling to be passionate.

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