

IV-10 Word Play

It is a common sense that eye can see only what the mind knows. The uncommon sense goes beyond what one knows to access the concept space of the representation.

The imagined may not be possible, yet possibilities often remain unimagined. Imagining situations elicited by words is a way to explore objective world. Talent lies not only in thinking up possibilities. Task of playful imagination is in ascertaining whether a particular is really possible so as to make the function accessible. Thought experiments explore context through playful manipulation of variables and relations with an appeal to the process and the goal. The imagined may not fit perfectly, but a representation becomes suspect if it is too good to be true.

Framing questions. Words have shifting boundaries defined by use. It is not trivial to decide the core feature of a word in use although etymologists and philologists have rules to do so. Old meanings tend to persist along with the new. Consider the term energy. It has wide-ranging meanings in the historical and cultural contexts. In such usages ordered processes require energy. Interpretation of the term energy applied to quantify the invisible content of a system, that is an essential variable for the change, goes to the heart of the playfulness of metaphorical or rhetorical use of the term *energy of a conception or representation*. A modern conception of information is also as a form of energy intrinsic in the order (related to entropy). Attempts to capture the order are clearly intrinsic in perception, communication, tools, hypothesis, decision-making, thought, rationality, and knowledge.

Through word-play we realign thought. Child play is about bonding. Parlor games and other shared family activities for entertainment seem to increase during harder economic times. Such activities encourage players to come out of cocoon to laugh and bind by exploring the relations.

The Sanskrit word *Kreeda-ratnam*, the jewel of plays, has been used in Kam Sutr to denote the playfulness of relationship and sexual acts. Play is not about winning or loosing even though there is an outcome. This ancient text clearly distinguishes it from games people play to impress, score or to win, as is intrinsic in sex-appeal. Also consider the consequences of introducing the idea of sin in the sex play, or of the distortions introduced by the advice *to lie there* by the stiff-upper lip Victorians, or *to fake orgasm* by the feminists, or the rationalization in some teenage cultures to engage in mindless sex because *there is nothing else to do*.

Concept of play is as wide as a human culture. It is voluntary activity executed within limits of time and place. Rules freely accepted, yet binding to those within. Its aim is in itself. It is accompanied by a feeling of tension, joy and conscious awareness that is not necessarily *different from ordinary life*. It excludes little, yet it is utterly frivolous to those without. Other elements of play that have been identified are free, separate, uncertain, unproductive, governed by rules, and make-belief. Seeming inconsistencies and no reference to the cultural context or ad hoc values for playfulness has bothered some. However, such factors can be accommodated in the loosely defined rules and thereby destroy the existential view of the play worlds. Play is over at the moment the players take off their masks.

Mathematical game theory spans a very narrow range of actions of hypothesized rational (rule-based) players. Play covers a much broader range where the players are not necessarily

rational enough to obey all the rules all the time. For quantitative, mathematical, and intellectual purposes one may wish to consider the restrictions and limiting qualifications that make a game out of a play and vice versa.

Room for Doubt

Preface

1. It is Jungle out There!
2. Brute Force of Articulated Grunt
3. Between the Bits of Utterances
4. In a Word
5. To a Concept
6. Taming Memes and Sound Bites
7. Words Hijack Thoughts
8. On the Tail of Two Tales
9. Anecdotes: Experience or Wishful
10. Word Play
11. Parables as Thought Algorithms
12. Hearing to Listen and Looking to See
13. Standardization of Meaning
14. Tales Explore Meaning
15. Cast of Characters
16. Play With Unknown and Unexpected
17. Ways of Doubt
18. Reference, Reason, Resonance
19. Folly of Denying "I"
20. Deconstruction of ad hoc
21. Survival by Trial
22. Flowers in the Garden of Eden?
23. Unintended Consequences
24. Bumbling Tool-Maker
25. Evolution by Trials
26. Interdependence for Independence
27. Is There a Bio-Logic?
28. Innovation Diffusion
29. Greed and Grab
30. Exploitation of the Commons
31. Unintended Consequences
32. Prediction
33. Chaos of Premature Ideas
34. Rationality by Practice
35. Mathematics Tracks Reality
36. Abstraction as But-nothing-else