

## IV-33 Chaos of Premature Ideas

Let the mind wander. Many things are out there. We may not be looking for them in the right way. We are not following the right track. We're following what may be important tracks, but we miss many possibilities. Ideas come up from time to time. But what makes them really significant is seeing what is important, and demonstrating them in a way that is convincing. Social reactions to the presentation of a new thought decide who wins and who loses. Resonance and dissonance include a combination of all the usual things that scholars do: patient argument, intimidation, ridicule, character assassination, amassing of facts, careful review of logic, mischaracterization of opponents' views, and scrupulous analysis.

Timing may not be everything. It can be critical for the success of premature, preemptive, or even preeminent. Both prudence and risk-taking have rewards in dealing with doubtful certitudes. Management of dread-risks can have more dreadful consequences than biding time. Premature overt actions are part of risk management: Novel solutions follow sneakiness and deviousness, and those who did not act in time are wiped out. Decision to act on the basis of incomplete information is integral to all real time decisions in virtually all spheres of human activities. Personal and social cost from misplaced and premature ideas can be far reaching, if not astronomical. Certainly the perpetual *I don't know* is not the way to live, although at times it may be prudent to choose nothing rather than suffer the consequences of nonsense.

Of course there are many dud ideas and many more misfire. Also in some areas it is necessary to be aware of managing change by manufacturing consent, or the interest groups that marginalize the significant to alternate. Policy oriented intellectuals and experts can also internalize the norms, if not be tools, of the state or the market.

Premature actions, as well as the range of responses they evoke, allow for learning from trial and error. It is the dynamics of transition from being taken over by common sense of the *tried and true* to being overtaken by the uncommon sense of doing something about the tired and indifferent. Personal and social reactions follow from the thought and behaviors that apparently ignore the current expediencies (based on available body of knowledge, facts, experiments, observation, data and information) to build on the not-so-obvious mechanisms, implications and alternatives.

**Reactions of people with what is not on their radar screen?**

Frustration follows if the search path is not predictable, systematic or linear. As the convincingly identifiable breakthroughs run into conflict with theory (dogma, taboo), perceptions try to grasp the new through stages of ridicule, opposition, and self-evident.

**Dissonances** deal with the doubt and the non-paradigmatic.

Consider a doctor's disdain for the patient who outlived prognosis. One Professor Cremorini greeted the telescope of Galileo: *.. and besides, looking through those spectacles gives me headache*. Einstein is said to have greeted quantum mechanics with a comment: *God does not play dice*. Reactions to what can not be ignored fall somewhere between death, wars, inquisition, scorn, derision, rejection, skepticism, and innuendos.

**Resonance** is change of attitudes on seeing ideas in action: Raising questions to identify issues, acknowledge gaps, predict what and where to look for. Reward may be in not being ignored, to grudging acknowledgement as the *apparently impossible*, to the *expected or obvious*. At one time or another such apparent impossibilities have included ideas of flying machines, continental drift, quantum mechanics, laser and maser, the internet revolution, as well as the idea of peaceful means for conflict resolution and coexistence.

**Vindication** can come in unusual forms.

- Lord Rutherford believed: *Science is physics and all else is stamp collecting*. Few years later for his work Rutherford was awarded the Nobel Prize for Chemistry.
- Near the end of the twentieth century the Vatican authorities accepted the idea that spherical Earth orbits around the Sun. The idea has been around for the last 3000 years and the compelling evidence was already established 400 years ago when the wrath of the Church had peaked. Did it make a difference to anybody else except the Church itself? Cleansing its soul?
- US Supreme Court in 2003 ruled that what two consenting adults do in their bed-room is not a concern of the State. Was it mere affirmation of a wide spread practice?

Resonance and dissonance from dynamics of point and counterpoint, or pro and con, is an integral part of validation process. It is a necessary precondition for the acceptance by the peers, and also for practice by the community at large. The canonical knowledge may at times appear to be created by the powers-to-be (courts, experts, divine), but often they put their seal of approval (affirmation) when the ideas are already in wide spread practice.

Practice of seminal ideas evolves through trial and error. The process is democratic and chaotic: Not because each person is equally empowered but because for validation, and to sooner or later weed out the wrong or contradictory, the process gives a chance to all relevant arguments. Concern and caution affirm behaviors built on probable worlds. Although not evident to the observers at the fringes, the best of ideas are about the methods and outcomes that take advantage of premature thought. The approach is hijacked when we are told that *this is what it is, that is what is meant to be, and that is all there is*.

Then there are the quasi-, pseudo- and omni-sciences which abound in public and market arena. With the emphasis on the proven theories and without an explicit appreciation of the real particulars, the science taught in schools amounts to a quasi-science. Pseudo-sciences rely on ad hoc theories that attempt to account for everything without ascertaining veracity. Such groups can hardly distinguish the reality of an airplane from the mere ideas of UFO, extrasensory perception from what is in front of them, perpetual motion machines that run on water from the automobiles. Similarly, reliance on omni-science goes nowhere like a cart without a horse. Justified with flimsy excuses such blinders relegate the impossible to couch ignorance and biases. Tests for screening such irrationalities include testability, falsifiability, verifiability, predictability, Occam's razor, paranoia.

**Uncommon sense**

Premature does not include anything that contradicts or violates the basic laws of conservation of matter, energy and information. The law that *something cannot be created from nothing* rules out all manners of perpetual motion machine and omniscience. It takes an uncommon sense to grasp variations on

the theme that *a real entity cannot exist at two places at the same time*. Almost everything that stands beyond such limits imposed by the reality can be considered possible. All together, uncommon sense is required to realize the potential of what appears counter to modes of reality.

It requires common sense to appreciate what lies in the realm of feasible. Uncommon sense makes us realize what lies outside the realm of reality. Common sense has survival value because it recognizes niches of here and now. Mechanisms to correct the course of an endeavor lie in its demonstrated utility. Often it is difficult to distinguish or grasp the significance of that is not here and now. Elements of the resonance and dissonances emerge as precursor to the uncommon sense. Realization of what lie ahead comes in stages as we begin to perceive, see, notice, appreciate, accept and evaluate. At each stage implications are examined through disbelief, disagreement, skepticism, humiliation, derision, silence, and versions of *trust me*. Open-minded honesty with compassion, and not mere logical argumentation, is probably more effective. Acceptance beyond the disciplinary and cultural boundaries demands demonstrated relevance to the local concerns.

As a way of knowing, validity relies on feedback. This is how resonance and dissonance to premature validate experience. Beliefs increase the threshold for the alternatives. Successful outcome requires a healthy respect for the tension that comes from *show me how do you know before I make up my mind*. The value of doubt is in finding relevant truths, and then in figuring out relevance of truth by minimizing uncertainties, and then in addressing skeptical concerns for acceptability.

As some outcomes are deemed desirable, many more are

regretted. One can only respect the human propensity for what matters to each is his own opinion. If every idea is to be tested, most will also be discarded. One should not draw a line before hearing out the case even if in the market place of idea one is *damned to argue the same questions over and over and over and ..*

Explorations through variations on theme are worth defending. The pragmatist believes in the sufficiency of human practices, and is not dismayed even if those practices are shown to be grounded in nothing more or less than their own traditions and histories. The impossibility of tying our everyday meanings and values to the less local environments does not suspend their reality. Suspect is the form of thought that would deny this and the means of empirical search.

# Room for Doubt

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