

## III-2. Representation for Potential

Potential lies in the promise of a premise. A viable premise has to be free of inconsistencies and contradictions. Premise shapes decisions because even if everything was possible everything is not worth doing. Our actions are guided by perceptions with incomplete information and consequences in doubt.

As such mind does not the real from unreal. Human mind deals with represented symbols to extract their meaning, significance, relevance, and potential. However, tangibility and validity of the resulting construct is to be evaluated by independent evidence by defined criteria. Sharing a construct facilitates playful manipulation to ascertain its veracity. Here if seeds represent dormant potential, all plants start out as weeds until we establish usability and serviceability. The process fails if it is self-referential. Such constructs based on ad hoc universals and omniscience close the human mind for new inputs.

### **Perceptions for conception of potential**

- \* History is not something that happens to other people.
- \* Dare to be naive (Buckminster Fuller).
- \* Anything that exists is possible. (Kenneth Boulding).
- \* I had the good fortune of being able to make my plans in near perfect ignorance of my destination (Eric Hanson).
- \* At first people refuse to believe that a strange new thing can be done, and then they begin to hope it can be done. When it is done, all the world wonders why it was not done centuries ago (Frances Hodgson Burnett).

\* Human beings are all right for as long as they are ignorant of Ignorance. This is our normal condition. But when we know we don't know, we can't stand it (Lewis Thomas).

\* An innate preference for the represented subject over the real one: the defect of the real one was so apt to be a lack of representation. I like things that appeared, than one was sure (Henry James).

\* If you ask me whether there is another world, well, if I thought there were, I would say so. But I don't say so. And I don't deny it. And I don't say there neither is, nor is not another world. And if you ask me about the beings produced by chance; or whether there is any fruit, any result, of good or bad actions; or whether a man who won the truth continues or not after death - to each or any of these questions do I give the same reply (Sanjay Belatthiputta, ca. 600 BC).

\* Word about word by the people who have used words effectively! The meaning of the word is in its use (Wittgenstein).

\* Concepts are attached to structures of activities external to mind. All languages are full of images and metaphors whose origin is being lost together with the art from which they are created (Robert Oppenheimer).

\* When you think of alphabets, that are asked to bear all the human investigations and all the aspirations and appetites that we have and that have ever existed in human history - it is terribly abstract (Alan Gurganus).

\* If men do not pour new wine in old bottles, they do something almost as bad: they invest old words with new meanings (Herbert A. Simon).

\* Mathematics is a language that sometimes makes things clearer to me than do other languages, and that sometimes helps me discover things that I have been unable to discover with the use of other languages (J. Willard Gibbs).

\* If you ask unconscious to give you information in your dreams it will oblige you. It is really amazing how the unconscious longs for ways to get in touch with us (S. Grafton).

**Understanding the rules of the game.** The criteria of space and time form the basis for all aspects of modern scientific methods. What may appear as disorder, chaos and complexity in our initial perceptions assumes order through representations. Its constructs emerge in stages. At what stage do we decide to play with the representation and how may be a matter of individual taste for the risk-taking and venturing out on a limb. Potential lies at the edges of interactions with our motifs and constructs.

Crosscurrents with conflicting trends and tendencies are all too dominant in the observed world. Unless processed it is not intuitively comprehensible to most of us. What we see at first glance is some kind of average of all happenings and the chatter of our minds. To get around it we learn to express the world experience in parts to which the language imposes linearity. The world is not linear or local, yet we identify with local order. We assign it identity through identified entities and events. As motifs such parts begin to have identifiable existence in all worlds of our experience. Representation and identification of motifs is possibly the first step towards what we will know and understand.

The divide-and-conquer strategy to represent and identify world through discrete symbols and metaphors leaves room for doubt. We acknowledge that through such search alone we may not know everything about what it is, let alone how it came to be and what lies ahead. But such balancing act with parts is critical for real-time decisions as well as contemplation. Such interaction with reality is about playing games with observed as well as about the playfulness of the observer. It is our privilege that as humans we can be players as well as the object of play, and know it. Our mind tries to understand us by looking at how look into our mind. Our interactions with the complexity of the inner and outer

worlds begin with assertions like *I exist, I think, and I am confused*. Therein lies the individual potential of the motif we call the self.

**Humans are capable of the widest range of perceptions.** It increases the range of our choices. Possibly for such reasons, our behaviors range from random and stone-blind to sublime, considerate, compassionate, and rational. This would not have been possible without shared motifs and goals. Such wide-ranging perceptions increase the range of awareness of certain representations and motifs. Perceptions are shaped by the extent to which an observer not only interacts, but is also willing to interact with the observed. Chaotic interactions with the disorder are not mere blips in perceptions. It is the way we pick and choose parts of the experience. Such eminence is not the pre-existence of "truth" but learning to identify emerging motifs.

The extent and quality of interaction with reality is part of probabilistic and philosophical approaches to identify "domain of reason and rationality." Not only the science would not be possible without it, but it extends to evaluation virtually all behaviors including learning, education, economics, and social sciences. In such evaluations the norm of the realized potential lies in the average behavior. The unrealized potential lies in the significant departures from the norm. As such, the norms do not distinguish animate from inanimate, or rational from irrational. What distinguishes them is the power to make decisions. It is a critical step for doing something about realizing the unrealized potential. It is not a uniquely human attributes, but they are better empowered by the social institutions.

Then there is the matter of emphasis and assumptions that shape our perceptions and its expression. If the emphasis is on eminence, what follows is an emphasis on the ways we handle the

experience of the past to guide the future. With this mindset one may speak of seeking knowledge or truth. It is possibly an extension of the childhood motifs where one looks for something that may be out there, or known to somebody out there.

One may start with the assumption that what exists is the reality. Our represented motifs are we experience of it, at least for the purpose of sharing. It does not make the representations entirely valid. In culling the complexity of a world for representation one remains aware of the fact that it does not represent the entire world. Representations are about the worlds of our awareness with a full realization that there are other known worlds, and there may be still other which we are not aware of. It does not give use the freedom to invent delusions. By rooting representations in awareness that can be shared, resulting motifs are useful for real-time interactions with those parts of the world that have affinity of the motif with the concern at hand. From this vantage point we motifs help us start a journey of explorations.

The view of pre-existing truth is intrinsic in the term discovery. Consider the 'discovery of the New World.' It appears to ignore the fact that the land mass existed long before the Vikings or Christopher Columbus ever set foot on it. These continents were home to the millions of people and life forms some which are not extinct. This is not to undermine the fact that the route that Columbus discovered had a tremendous impact. The reality of discovering unknown continents opened new worlds. Just as the Cook's voyages took stock of all the land mass on Earth, resulting practices of technologies and resource use have also brought us to the realization that the planet also has other limits.

Rather than dwelling on the discovery of truth, in recent years the general emphasis of thought exploration has shifted to

the reality-based approaches. Known limits of the underlying reality also constrain thought and guide reason from one consistency to the next. Potential is in the resulting alternatives of the content and the contexts. Such limits are being better defined with knowledge that seeks to avoid contradictions and inconsistency rather than seek truth. In this journey it is far more appropriate and meaningful to talk about the versions of truth rather than a single truth. It is not unlike the versions of a computer programs, such as the versions of Windows. Not all of these are useful for all users, but the changes that stick around from generation to generation are useful.

Empirical exploration of reality is facilitated by representation of its parts. Resulting motifs and insights are discrete and necessarily tentative. However the method has done more for the human well-being than virtually any truth of the seers or seekers.

# Against Gods and Humbug

## Preface

1. Paradox of Choices
2. Representation for Potential
3. Feedback from Interactions
4. What Is Rationality?
5. Meaning to a Speck of Dust
6. The Unknown and the Doubtful
7. Actions Have Consequences
8. Beginning of a Decision
9. Tools for Thought Search
10. Living with Doubt
11. Who to Trust?
12. Living with Incomplete Knowledge
13. Do People Tell Lies?
14. Social Influences of Non-violence
15. Greed and Grab
16. Conduct with Consistency
17. An Activist Perspective
18. Causality: End or Means to Reality
19. Negate the Wishful
20. Man is Capable of Being Rational
21. Making Decisions
22. Keeping Viable Options Open
23. Inference and Successful Behavior
24. Genesis of Syad: The Logical Doubt
25. Science-based Conduct?
26. Philosophy and Logic for Action
27. Actions That Matter
28. Tragic versus Tragedy
29. Representation of Order with Room for Doubt
30. War Promises Meaning to the Otherwise Meaningless Lives
31. A Peace to End All Peace
32. Knowledge: Been There
33. Equation for Potential
34. Why I Am Not Moral
35. Unleashing Thought: Taming Brawn, Grunt, and Smarts