

III-27. Actions That Matter

They call war an art, but it isn't. It largely consists of outwitting people, creating and then robbing widows and orphans, and inflicting suffering on the helpless for one's own ends - and that's not art: that's business.

- Kenneth Roberts

Actions often have consequences well beyond the recognized and immediate outcomes. Pragmatism lies in doing something about those that matter. Such choices are useful for what we can and also for what we can not do. Having choice goes with the responsibility for the consequences for ones own actions. It is a positive and secular attribute of being human because it frees mind from the grip of the unknown and the unknowable.

For the next step consider some real examples:

- Bad behaviors of parents show up in children.
- Watching violent shows on TV at the age of 5 is correlates with the behavior problems at the age of 15.
- Cigarette smoking is correlated with lung cancer.
- As for the second hand smoke: When a town in Montana banned public smoking, the number of heart attack cases coming to the hospital emergency rooms decreased by 50% within 3 months.

Are these coincidences? Does one behavior reflect the propensity for the other? Is it causal? How can we be sure? We do not know the answers. It should not prevent us from taking necessary measures. Taking charge of what is consequential call for empirical search.

Justification against death penalty

Several recent cases from USA illustrate an unusual aspect of the issue. On re-examination of the evidence on which convictions were made, students of a Law School found that out of the 24 inmates on the death-row in Illinois 13 were convicted of crimes that they had never committed. As a result several states decided to stop human executions, and review all such cases.

Considering the survival instinct, generally there is an innate revulsion in all living beings against violence, at least towards their own kind. Virtually no animal kills other animals for anything but for food. Even the primates are not as aggressive as were once thought to be. To overcome the instinctive revulsion one needs regimentation of faith and fervor to indoctrinate (brainwash) people into killing each other. Even a chicken or dog can be trained to be a killer.

What happens to that innate revulsion? Clever guises have been devised to put a distance between the mayhem and the individuals who cause it. Through elaborate means individual is marginalized to *see nothing, think nothing* zombie. In the life of those who are already marginalized, nothing works better than a *higher purpose* such as being on the right side.

When do our actions commit us to the consequences? It is the *karm-bandh* that literally mean *bound by consequences of actions (of your own and others)*. It calls for actions based on the certainty of the outcome rather than belief. Irreversible outcomes are to be avoided, so also those with lasting and unpredictable consequences. Irreversible acts are rarely isolated single events. They set course for a trajectory of consequences.

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