

IV-11 Parables as Thought Algorithms

We all embroider. Storytellers explore and aspire to validate the range of our perceptions. In all cultures tales have evolved and are adopted as a means of portrayal of the patterns and events of human life. As prose and poetry of daily living they have homely paradigms. They cut deep into psychological problems, fears, consolations and aspirations to provide captivating webs of social meanings for resolutions. They illustrate complex concepts by bringing out variations on a theme (motifs, family ties, personality types, cultural niches, attendant traditions, world-views and contexts). Parables play with the questions of reality imbued with methods and philosophies.

Parables have a role in exploration and disseminations. Effective parables algorithmically explore alternatives and choices through evaluation of outcomes and consequences. Traditions and customs often relate to substantive matters (concepts, models, theories) accomplished by diversity of methods and practices. Variables may not be easily identified and expressed for the thought experiment, yet certainty emerges as successful practices modify the search algorithm. When repeated in different contexts anecdotes become parables that explore boundaries of the new experience. Although such devices explore ideas and aesthetics relegated by each narrator and listener, in this struggle between content and rhetoric attention to cultural sensitivities is critical if the wider appeal is not to be lost.

Cognition for consequence evaluation. All dealings that shape the man while carrying out the ordinary business of life fall in the realm of cognition that is about the content of sensory inputs.

Like actions, choices also have outcome and consequences. Choices are based on the alternatives that have to *be sought* (steady-state) and not just *be given* (equilibrium in perfect world). Each of the alternatives, including no-choice and placebo, has outcome and consequences. Perception enters both in seeking the choices as well as in evaluating the rational consequences of the alternatives.

How often do we hear but not listen? Look and not see? People respond in their own ways to the same entity or event. The same holds for anecdote, painting, or a textbook passage. Differences prevail even among those from the same background and comparable natural abilities to respond. Active interaction with inputs is critical for communication and sharing the experience. It thrives on honest difference of opinion. Not all such differences have skeptical origins. It is integral part of our being through mind, nature, genes, nurture, and culture?

Playful interaction through anecdotes, tales and parables is the way to compare and contrast individual perceptions that are multidimensional. Methods based on the use of language are linear. Tales try to circumvent the problem of linearity by evoking and eliciting the *feel* for the situation and experience. For the face to face communication one relies on gazing where the narrator is coming from. It is there in the content, intonations, body language, and the background of the speaker. Such awareness is enhanced as we try to peer into the mind of the narrator. The loss can be crippling if the author is separated by time, space or culture. To make up for the loss in translations, re-narrations require renditions with substantial interpretation of the intention and context. Here the judgment-mechanics of the author, teller, interpreter, and reader becomes critical for evaluating the level of perception of reality communicated through words.

Difference between the perceived and objective environment is the drive for all interactions. In the perceived world of a decision-maker the total available information does not approximate the total information in the external environment. Acknowledged sins of commissions (distorted perceptions and inference) and omissions (ignorance, gaps) provide the drive for the search for viable alternatives - but only within limits of the perceived choices. The information available to an individual is filtered, distorted and approximated if it is not available at all, or the listener does not have ability to evaluate the choices to their logical inference, or if the number of choices is too large.

Key elements for interaction with parables are attention and exploration of alternatives as rules, roles and choices of individual behaviors. Here one enters the realm of premises based on perception, beliefs, knowledge and personality. This is not just a set of prescribed or proscribed behaviors. It is a matrix of criteria for generating and evaluating possible courses of action, and also for assessing the state of environment and implications for actions.

When we have it all together we have an algorithm for a role of a decision-maker. With a full realization that the rational decisions do not guarantee success, algorithms can only lead to many of the possible alternatives for the decisions to be made under a variety of conditions. In an abstract sense key elements of the process include:

- Decision premises for the problem and the processes (no matter what the outcome).
- Search activity based on meeting the aspirations.
- Operative goals based on observable criteria of success through defined means of attainment. Non-operative goals lack concrete measure of success or programs for attainment.

- Emerging roles
- Tracing the implications
- Parable algorithms are based on little reliance on earlier models of success. Here there is a tug between opportunities versus tendency towards the equilibrium for optimum. This is how iterations through relevant anecdote and parables become effective learning tools.

One learns that all conclusions (guesses) are fallible simply because the evidence is never complete. Good guesswork requires efficient use of all the available information by enabling variations of rashness and caution to be distinguished from variations in the amount of the available evidence that is used. Threshold criteria (values, culture, apathy) are key factors for resolving signal from noise through versatile and creative guessing as well as correct and efficient guessing.

A lack of such sensitivities and sensibilities is obvious in the less interactive narratives. Beyond the limitation of the devices, the metaphors do little to a casual reader without the benefit of being sensitized. Interpretation, through active interaction of the narrator with the listener, defines the limits and context of the metaphor for flow of thought and ideas to weave personal elements into the bigger tapestry. Otherwise, one remains in ones own corner of the universe from where the rest remains inaccessible.

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