30th November 2006 | Draft

Governance through Patterning Language

Creative Cognitive Engagement contrasted with Abdication of Responsibility

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Introduction

From an objective perspective, as favoured by the strategic and management evaluation styles of past decades, things are not going well on this planet -- my planet. Regional conflicts, global warming, AIDS, food shortages, energy, etc, etc. For some this perception can be fruitfully reframed through optimistic spectacles that seek to engender hope for the future irrespective of the lived experience of the present -- and the track record of the past. Such has been the strategic promise of governments and the United Nations for decades.

However it is clear that, despite virtually unlimited resources, there is little effective capacity to manage disaster relief (as with Hurricane Katrina), "humanitarian" military intervention (as with post-invasion recontruction in Iraq), or more "manageable" projects (as with the European construction of Airbus A380 and the computerization of the UK National Health Service). Faced with incapacity in response to deprived communities, refugees and mass migration, mega-projects, such as going to Mars and beyond, acquire the dubious significance of "show trials" for the purpose of mass distraction (Marina Hyde, *Is this what the final frontier has become? A golf course? Guardian*, 25 November 2006). Despite their much vaunted skills, the complexity sciences do not appear to have had any significant impact on the management of these planetary challenges. There is every indication that the situation is unlikely to improve significantly.

Rather than unsubstantiated (and possibly highly irresponsible) optimism, **the concern here is whether there is a possibility of more radical ways of engaging with knowledge of detectable dysfunctionality in order to engender a more creative response.** Rather than achieve optimism by excluding, if not completely denying, the vast array of problematic information, the question is how to hold and configure knowledge to enable transformative approaches to the conditions of the planet -- my planet. Specifically, given the proliferation of information beyond any meaningful understanding of overload, the question is how to package relevant knowledge -- how to "wrap up" the world into a comprehensible whole conducive to meaningful action.

Challenge

The question explored below is the possible nature of a cognitive focus characterized by:

- greater intensity
- improved information "antenna" -- cognitive "antenna"
- enhanced interaction with relevant knowlege
- a higher degree of grounded embodiment

Ironically some of these cognitive challenges are precisely those identified by the term "cognitive fusion" as employed in the cognitive enhancement of fighter pilots. Characteristics of what can be variously understood as "fusion" are indeed of potential interest (cf *Enactivating a Cognitive Fusion Reactor: Imaginal Transformation of Energy Resourcing (ITER-8)*, 2006). Curiously they also feature as a prime attractor characteristic of interactive computer games with their increasing emphasis on hyperrealism (***). To be dicovered is what needs to be "fused" and how that relates to creative intelligence and operacy in other practical contexts

Irrespective of how this challenge may be met for individuals, the larger challenge is that for collectives. How do the bodies, to which I have variously delegated responsibility for holding the values of my planet, engage with each other and with the problems of my planet?

How do I recognize creative intelligence in others and engage creatively with it -- especially when I may be operating with a lower order of intelligence? What are the threads that need to be woven together to augment such creative response?

Such a challenge needs itself to be challenged. As "fusion" implies, there is potentially an excessive degree of "heat" under conditions where "cool" may be more appropriate. The contrast was notably a concern of Marshall McLuhan (*Understanding Media: the extensions of man*, 1994). The value of cool, in contrast to heat, is a topic of study (Jeff Rice, *The Handbook of Cool*), understood as detached and uninvolved while simultaneously in and contributing to the culture. For *Wikipedia*, cool in popular culture is:

> an aesthetic of attitude, behaviour, comportment, appearance and style. Because of the varied and changing connotations of cool, as well its subjective nature, the word has no one meaning. It has associations of composure and self-control (cf. the *OED* definition) and is very frequently used as an expression of admiration or approval. A great deal of literature has been committed to understanding the concept of cool in societies.

If any form of "fusion" is appropriate to the organization of knowledge and action, it may well have aesthetic and subjective characteristics that relate it more closely to those of "non-action" as advocated by eastern philosophy (cf *The Quest for the Socio-Economics of Non-Action*, 1993). The difficulty is that whilst "fusion" is considered concretely meaningful in terms of action, any attitude implying "non-action" has credibility only to some. Ironically the term "cold fusion" would be as controversial metaphorically as it is in relation to physical phenomena.

Like others before him, playwright Steve Waters (*The Paralysis of Creation*, *Guardian*, 23 November 2006) expreses the challenge as one of imagination:

> Yet the elusive challenges of climate change won't serve as a call to arms until we unlock our imagination from its current paralysis. Admittedly the facts are pretty paralysing....Unfortunately the first casualty of this barrage of bad news is the imagination....The result is a contraction of the horizon... This inability to connect trauma in the biosphere with the small print of our lives stalls the necessity for radical change.

Incapacity and information overload

There are many new knowledge management tools -- and newer ones are emerging and envisaged. However it is quite unclear that computer augmented intelligence is actually responding to the challenge to the degree required by the challenge (and Ashby's *Law of Requisite Variety*). New capacities to make and look at patterns of information do not appear to be enabling action in response to the deteriorating conditions of the planet -- my planet.

Curiously the ills of society and the planet have never been better documented (cf *Encyclopedia of World Problems and Human Potential* ***). This is matched by the most extensive security controls in the history of mankind on the part of democracies, through electronic and satellite surveillance -- beyond the dreams of the KGB and Stasi. People are even encouraged to report on each other to a much highder degree ("in the interests of national security"). "Threats" to society are now available at the touch of a finger to those who believe they have the capacity to act appropriately in response. And yet the level of incompetence continues to increase as most notably evident in post-invasion "nation-building" in Afghanistan and Iraq. As an exemplification of "worst practice" (without resource constraints), the appropriateness of efforts to identify "best practice" (despite severe resource constraints) is thereby called into question.

Given the availability of information, and the sophisticated "situation rooms" in which to assess appropriate responses, how is it that at the highest level (amongst elites) there is a pronounced tendency to rely on croneyism? (eg recognition that many agencies in the US have been "FEMAfied"; all decisions by Labour in the UK since the mid-1990's have been handled by Blair and his inner clique [more]) How is it that the most vital information is communicated phatically, in face-to-face interaction, rather than through the sophisticated tools designed to enhance the quality of decision making? Is this a means of using the limited ability to transfer information in such human contexts as a legitimate excuse for avoiding other information -- or for responding creatively to the challenge of information overload?

How is it that -- in my world -- increasing capacity has been matched to such a degree by increasing incapacity? What is this process of enantiodromia whereby the action of democracies in response to the evils of totalitarianism has resulted in the transformation of democracies to embody characteristics of that which they so righteously reviled? Is it my (in)competence in depending on such actors in the drama of my life that is being brought into question?

The argument is developed in the following separate documents:

Annex 1: Distinguishing Levels and Patterns of Strategic Obsolescence
Annex 2: Creative Cognitive Engagement: Beyond the Limitations of Descriptive Patterning
Annex 3: Dematerialization and Virtualization: Future Governance Implications and Applications

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Conclusion

The cognitive implications of the argument might be usefully summarized in the following table:

attachment to specifics	*detachment from specifics*

abdication of responsibility	engagement with context

The left-hand column of the table highlights two complementary conditions, namely abdication of responsibility (for the condition of the whole) accompanied by attachment to matters immediately perceived (objects, possessions, etc). The right-hand column points to the possibility of a second set of complementary conditions: cognitive engagement with context (the environment, etc) and detachment from specifics (of that context).

The diagonals in the table of course highlight commonalities between the diagonally opposing quadrants. In effect the capacity to "abdicate" could be transformed into a capacity to "detach", whereas a capacity to "attach" could be transformed into a capacity to "engage". Such a "transformation" is a matter of introducing a higher degree of flexibility and fluidity into attitudes that are otherwise held to rigidly -- and are effectively "locked" onto the "target" they have cognitively "acquired".

The challenge implied by the table is of course typical of that of governance, notably in relation to territory. More generally the challenge relates to issues of property, notably intellectual property.

Ways of responding to the challenge are in process of being explored in a healthy manner in various arenas including: the open-source software development movement, the complementary currency movement, etc.

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