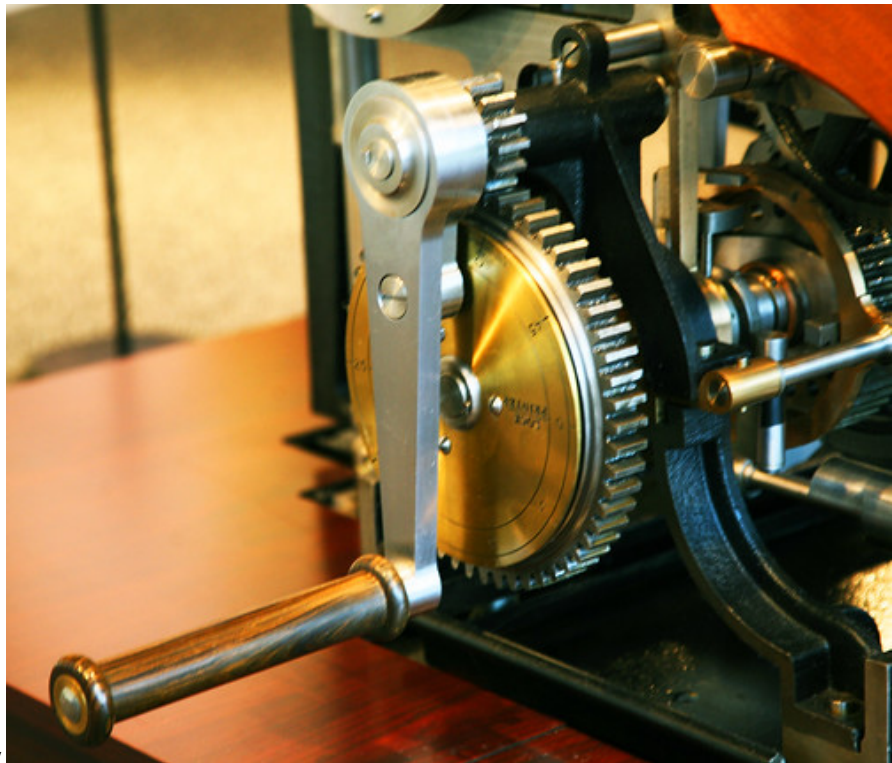


5. Questions that Matter

Gregory Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, p. 459, Chapter "Form, Substance and Difference"

- What we mean by information — the elementary unit of information — is a difference which makes a difference, and it is able to make a difference because the neural pathways along which it travels and is continually transformed are themselves provided with energy. The pathways are ready to be triggered. We may even say that the question is already implicit in them.



Mind and Nature, a necessary unity, 1988

- Human sense organs can receive only news of difference, and the differences must be coded into events in time (i.e., into changes) in order to be perceptible. Ordinary static differences that remain constant for more than a few seconds become perceptible, only by scanning. Similarly, very slow changes become perceptible only by a combination of scanning and bringing together observations from separated moments in the continuum of time.

- p. 74-75

5.1 Why questions?

Teaching focused on answers, rather than finding better questions.

Difference between education and learning. Education systems are not set up for learning.

5.2 Individual and group differences?

Both?

		Group	
		Pursuit of answers	Pursuit of questions
Individual	Pursuit of answers	Clarity (guided or misguided)	Individual frustration; group divergence
	Pursuit of questions	Sage for the patient	Long vision, stumbling over the present

5.3 What matters?

Both?

	Rational	Non-rational
Heuristics	Automation	?
Intuition	Good enough, until deliberation is possible	Human judgement

Churchman argued that the rational is only 10%. If you focus on the rational, then you miss the human experience.

Collingwood is big on questions. Fundamental presumptions (the emphasis of metaphysics).

Hawk introduced the irrational to Churchman. Those who try to introduce the rational to non-rational leads to irrationality. Example: introducing rationality to religion leads to irrationality.

Court cases, judges require rationality. These generate cases of irrationality that are expensive.

Developers in England weren't getting projects approved by town councils, as they were trying to be rational (job growth). Little old ladies screaming they didn't like it, didn't want it. The worse thing possible happened, they were thrown out of the room by the judge were marked as unrational. Little old ladies lay down in front of bulldozers. Developers learned to work with the little old ladies, the non-rational, and improve the projects.

Churchman enemies may be better as adversaries or opponents. More passion. Not involved, not deciding, or see aspects that destabilize them.

Coal miners didn't understand what Trist was saying, but trusted him. The more they understand, the more they're an adversary.

Computers, instead of making people smarter, have made them stupider. It's worse, as moving from computers to tablets and smartphones, which are primarily read-devices, rather than read-write.

Artificial intelligence, to be successful, has to get rid of human intelligence. But, if there's not a lot of human intelligence, it's not a big deal.

How to embrace the non-rational? With a sense of humour. Poetry captures some.

Is there a synthetic rationality? Can scenarios include aesthetics? Ackoff used idealization is a trick to get people thinking about the present reality.

How to negotiate within the world of the non-rational? Evil is part of being human. The more tangible and understandable the Energy Star requirements, the more opportunities for deceit. If you have more abstract, the people have to think systemically. The people most successful at eliminating atmospheric pollution were converting it to solid waste, and dumped it into the river. The analytic approach was disastrous.

EnergyStar homes would be used with materials that would generate less use of energy, not triple-pane windows.

EPA fuel economy is analytic. EPA moving towards ethanol, whereas science says better off burning petroleum directly, and growing corn for food. In Brasil, ethanol is made from weeds, and low-quality plants.

The environment is not analytic.

Want to get to the consequences of the outputs. In the future, we will be dragged into consequential management. First, recognize that there will be consequences: disruptive, harmful or scary. Know those who set up the consequences will not be accountable. Society won't accept the consequences. Consequences will link up into a network. Climate change is only one symptom. Exponential growth of heat, people can't live outside. These are consequences of short-term results.

800 years to a solution. Get rid of all blacktop roads, go back to gravel, as blacktop absorbs heat. Many ways to undo, but each is more cute than helpful. When it's too late, there's no undoing, as nature is more powerful.

The good is unpredictable as the bad. The good is not restricted by the rational.

A systemic approach to quality of life?

Ackoff: those who worry about quality of life measures, are those who have given up on their own quality of life.

Do the other things, e.g. giving people autonomy; giving them minimal support, education. You don't do them one by one, they're interactive.

Ozbeikhhan: learning how to ask questions. Assigned Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance.

(2004-2005) Part D. Will

So, how do we bridge the different world views?

{2005/07/03, DLH in Cancun: Collingwood, and then we don't have look at motivation.}

{2005/07/03, DLH in Cancun: Adam Smith, markets have no morals}

Will, as a reflection that we, as a human beings have choice.

We have to want to bridge communities/worlds (but at which point do growing systems break down,

which make an ecology a better idea?)

{2005/07/03, Cancun: Network form}

Other ideas that were along this line:

- progress (but this could also somehow needs to include “return to roots” ideas;
- sustainability (but this has a downside of the Faustian dilemma.

Demonstrations of Will (and lack thereof)

The difference between a first world country and a third world country is readily-available drinking water.

In Singapore, [From Third World to First : The Singapore Story: 1965-2000 by Lee Kuan Yew](#) " describes how the prime minister drove this as a something necessary (intuitively – and probably not economically justified on a cost-benefit analysis).

The solution need not be on a global scale. Ashok Gadgil, on [Massive Change Radio, November 11, 2003](#) describes the “the water crisis the world is facing today (with approximately 2 billion people without access to safe drinking water)”.

However, protests may be caused at a national level. See [Argentina Water Privatization Scheme Runs Dry, by Sebastian Hacher](#)

Someone who tried to do something: [Jamie Oliver's School Dinners](#) , and the “Feed Me Better” campaign.

Participation: Withdrawal versus Involvement

The “slow food” movement, as an alternative to “fast food”

“Voluntary simplicity” is a “simple life” movement, except that it seems to follow some Buddhist ideals.

{2005/07/03 in Cancun: Ideals as shared by purposeful systems (Ackoff) vs. only goals and not ideals as shared by purposeful systems (Emery). Plato as an ideal that never changes}

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