1. Introduction -- The Individual and the Group

{2005/07/16, DI: A more focused introductory paragraph added}

In human life, middle age represents a plateau. The shape we are in is a result of the way we have lived, to that point. We may be fit and ready for new challenges. Or, we may be obese and advised to change lifestyle. Or, we may still be struggling and destined to eke out a survival. In the same way, many of our social organizations are middle aged. A business may have attained its original goals, and looks towards new products, services or markets. A city or nation has all of the basic functions and social services in operation, and can choose to limit growth or expand. Not-for-profit institutions such as volunteer organization may have established legitimacy for issues important to their founders, that may or may not be relevant for newcomers. Understanding of the path that got us to the plateau is of limitied value in understanding the path ahead of us.

{2005/07/09, DI: Two new beginning paragraphs added}

Any human organizations seems to follow stages of life, akin to stages in biological organisms. At the beginning, we have youth. As each of us grow up, some traits develop to full fruition, while others remain recessive. Some traits seem predestined by our inherent nature, while others develop in response to conditions in our environments. If we are fortunate to avoid any number of accidents during our lifespans, we will naturally become elderly in a stage of senescence. In the last stages of life, our faculties fail, and life ends. Biology recognizes that a demise is inevitable, and part of the natural cycle.

Between youth and senescence is maturity. Maturity is generally regarded as the period when we stop growing, and we participate fully in our worlds. As human beings, however, we sometimes differentiate between young adults who are vital and full of energy, and those who are "middle aged". The "middle aged" can enjoy the benefits of earlier development, such as wealth and health. The "middle aged" also have to life with consequences of that path, and paths not taken. We may have become poor and feeble, or we may have become rich and obese. At this stage of life, our functions still work, but they are in slow decline. Some philosophies accept the decline as natural. Other philosophies aspire to rejuvenation.

1.1 From the middle age plateau, we can grow, coast or harvest

{2005/07/16: DI had written this section on 2005/07/09, but the orientation should be changed from one purely of decline, to one where our actions can mean further growth (with more difficulty), coasting (living for today) or harvesting (taking advantage of our prior benefits). The important idea is that we do have alternative actions from which to choose.}

We live in human organizations, many of which could be described as "middle aged". Many of us work in businesses, where we are frustrated by bureaucracy, lack of opportunity for development and/or an absence of social conscience. As urban dwellers, we complain about the maintenance of public goods such as roads, sewage and garbage pickup. As citizens in democratic societies, we lament the failure of our elected representatives to productively invest in our nations, in a balance where every individual receives appropriate privileges at a level of taxation that does not bankrupt us.

Symptoms include:

- Reduced momentum: An industry leader with a winning streak of successful products or services sees customer becomimg disenchanted with products or services that were considered world class a short time earlier. {An example?}

- Obsolescence / substitution: New competitors, as market segments blur, such as computer manufacturers invading consumer electronics (e.g. HP in digital photography); media distribution companies taking over content (e.g. Sony Music, Disney); competition from outsourcing to China and India

- Reluctance to invest in the future: Failure to renew infrastructure, e.g. electric utilities that don't want to replace existing power lines, increasing the risk of blackouts; or lack of investment in human capital by companies that could afford it, yet complain about lack of skilled resources.

- Drift and/or turnover: Commitment to the organization falls, as employees become a volunteer work force. The most competent head for greener pastures, while the turkeys refuse to quit.

- Denial of decline: The symptoms are apparent to everyone except the patient. Alternative views are considered to be heretical, and fall on deaf ears.

- Unintended consequences: Either through action or inaction, unexpected results appear. As an example, the Internet was expected to support the free flow of thoughtful discussion, but the reality that the largest revenue generator on the Internet is pornography.

- Protection of turf: Local interests outweigh global issues worthy of consideration and resources.

These symptoms may first appear as nuisances, becoming annoyances, escalating to minor issues and blooming a full-blown problems. They are often traps of our own making, as side effects from systems that are socially constructed. We tend to ignore the problems as minor, until remedial action is unavoidable.

1.2 What paths are open to us?

Should we think about our human organizations like biological organisms, with a natural and evitable youth, maturity, senescence and demise? Or should we find ways?

{2005/07/08 DI: The text below is still business-oriented, and I'd like to generalize it to be broader, socially}

Some might describe business as alchemy: part art and part science. The key to success is finding the right formula to apply to the business situation at hand. The next two chapters description some alternative views on business design (or redesign), followed by three major sections on how we can or should approach business.

1.21 Best: The one obvious way

{2005/07/16, DI: This section needs to be rewritten}

A business represents a group of individuals who work together, to produce something that they can not produce individually. These individuals band together and stay together due to shared values, and/or common interests. They may be seen as having shared ideals. When the business is small, those shared ideals implicit lead everyone to the same conclusion of which direction is "best". As a business grows, the view of "best" evolves, and leaders act as stewards navigating the interests within the enterprise with the demands of customers and pushes of competitive pressures. The "best" direction is not static, but changes with the natural turnover in a business, as some individuals pursue alternative directions, while new people bring new energies into the organization.

Part A, "Best" is presented in three chapters. In Chapter 4, "Choice" is presented as a direction that

initially seems as the most obvious, except that it is not without its pitfalls. Choosing the "best" also means that there are paths not chosen. In Chapter 5, "Risk", the emphasis is less on winning than on not losing. If some success has been achieved, there is often a choice between betting the bank, and cashing in the gains made so far. In Chapter 6, "Adaptation", success may be preserved, to a greater or less extent, by continually changing direction. Choosing such a varying path may result in desirable results, at the risk of getting lost.

1.22 Both: Multiple paths, simultaneously

{2005/07/16, DI: This section needs to be rewritten}

The business, as a complicated system, is often confronted with two paths, both attractive. With some ingenuity, the business may be able to pursue both paths, by organizing itself to simultaneously satisfy multiple directions and constituents in a complementary way.

Part B, "Both" is presented in the three middle chapters of the book. In Chapter 7, "Form" may present a constructive way of pursuing multiple opportunities simultaneously. A forked path may provide the foundation to cover greater ground, or may be a step towards dissipation. In Chapter 8, "Quality", disparate directions may be drawn together by recognizing common and divergent directions. The pursuit of progress may result in a greater coherency, or misdirection through fundamentalist interpretations of measures. In Chapter 9, "Trust" of collaborators or alliance partners can extend opportunities by reaching out to others. Partners can lead to outcomes not otherwise accessible, or fruitlessly burn up resources that could be productively applied elsewhere.

1.23 More: Finding 2 + 2 = 5

{2005/07/16, DI: This section needs to be rewritten}

The business, as a complex system, has found ways to deal with multiple directions and constituents, often conflicting. There may be any number of different reasons for maintaining the complexity: e.g. economies of scale, competitive advantage, pre-emptive control over resources – but these must be rooted in some attribute in the whole that is not in the parts.

The art in maintaining the complex system is to get "both plus more". The systems must do better than "both with less", and produce something greater.

Part C, "More" is composed of three chapters. In Chapter 10, "Ambiguity" may be seen as an opportunity by some, and as a threat by others. The unclearness allows more freedom for the imaginative, but is a fog for those on a linear path. In Chapter 11, "Arrogance" represents an obstacle to progress that must be overcome. It can be a clear target onto which energies are focused, or an ongoing reinforcement to ignorance or lack of learning. In Chapter 12, "Hope" is highlighted as an energizer that keeps us moving forward. It can be a powerful stimulant, but also a blindness if false.

1.24 Will: Acting with integrity and following through

{2005/07/16, DI: New section}

Much is possible, but action requires commitment.

Part D, "Will", is compose to two last chapters. In Chapter 13, "Best, Both, More – Revisited", we examine the different ends. {2005/07/16, DI: need to write more} In Chapter 14, "Relationships", we consider alternative attitudes between parties, as dependence, independence and interdependence". {2005/07/16, DI: need to write more}

1.3 A deeper understand of mutual paths is desired

{2005/07/16, DI: If the reader sticks with the boo, to the end, what end result do we expect? This writing would seem to fit here, since we've now outlined the major content.}

Joe Jackson wrote a song titled "You Can't Get What You Want, ('til you know what you want). Sometimes the path ahead is driven through joint action. Sometimes it is driven by individual action, inspiring others. It may even be driven by inaction or counter-action, which provokes a response.

{Is this book a guidebook? For what?}

1.4 Some introductory foundations on trajectory and complexity may be helpful

{2005/07/16, DI: The ideas of best, both, more and will are much more important than the foundations of trajectory and complexity, so I've pushed them farther down in the introduction. This also provides a more natural introduction to the next two chapters (as opposed to the four high-level parts).

Before embarking on understanding *Best*, *Both*, *More* and *Will*, some understanding of foundations is helpful

1.41 Trajectory: Our collective path

{2005/07/08, DI: This section is still old text, and speaks to truth, rather than trajectory}

Businesses are not systems that operate at random, with individuals just bouncing off each other. They are neither systems that are completely predetermined, like machines where every gear fits in with another. In reality, they are social systems, where individual and collective choices determine directions and appropriate behaviors.

There may not be a single "truth" about business. We will, however, attempt to give some insight into what businesses are about.

1.42 Complexity: Managing parts and wholes

{2005/07/16, DI: This section needs to be rewritten}

Describing a business as systems helps others understand what we mean. However, different people have different understandings of systems.

We suggest a three-way categorization of systems that clarifies some preconceptions about business: simple, complicated and complex systems. These descriptions are relative, but provide some anchors by which we can compare our views about a business with others.

Sidebar: Examples in BPM discussion database

{2005/07/16, DI: I suggest that we can delete these sidebar ideas, because I don't think that we should have sidebars in an introduction!)

- 2004/08/27 Starting where the reader is; the most personal is the most universal; "simple" systems {Gary Metcalf, 2004/08/18}

- 2004/08/27 Why can't computers be like cars? {Gary Metcalf, 2004/08/23}
- 2004/09/16 Demonizing SUVs lets the real devils go free {Richard Gilbert}
    - 2004/09/17 Changes in energy use – freight trucks [Centre for Sustainable Transportation, 2004]

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