Declaring of Universal Independence

Delinking from detachment through radical questioning

This is the development of the argument in a section of Dimension 4: Engaging with Globality through Knowing Thyself (2009) on the theme of Radical questioning: delinking from detachment. Dimension 4 is part of a four-fold exploration.

Overview of Engaging with Globality

Dimension 1: Cognitive Realignment — making points and aligning a target

Dimension 2: Cognitive Circlets — learning/action cycles

Dimension 3: Cognitive Crowns — all-encompassing, well-rounded experience

Dimension 4: Knowing Thyself — embodying engagement with otherness

"Re-cognition" of reality
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Introduction

The deliberate ambiguity of the wording of this Declaration of Universal Independence allows for various interpretations consistent with the exploration below and the theme of "knowing thyself" of which this is a part. It raises the question of whether "universal" might refer to independence by everyone, or whether the universe is thereby recognized to be independent in its own right, or whether the declaration is to be understood as by (or on behalf of) everyone -- as with so many other other "universal" declarations. It also raises questions about who is thereby empowered to make such a "declaration", to whom, and the cognitive implications of "independence".

The exploration follows from Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), from the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Human Organization -- an experimental extension of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1971), and from the Universal Declaration of Responsibilities of Human Intercourse (2007).

"Re-cognition" of reality

Perhaps the most fruitful outcome of the problematic governance of the Bush regime in the USA has been the legitimation, by the world's greatest superpower, of a radical approach to the "re-cognition" of reality. The enactivist approach to "laying down a path" one is walking (as articulated by Varela) may be usefully contrasted with a common practice of "lying about the path" -- whether to oneself or to others -- and exemplified by the pronouncements of world leaders with respect to WMD in Iraq.

Both may be contrasted with a distinction made by the Bush regime between "faith-based" and "reality-based" decision-making at the highest level, as noted in a much-cited article by Ron Suskind (Without a Doubt, The New York Times, In The Magazine, 17 October 2004) regarding an exchange with an aide in the decision-making circle of President Bush:
The aide said that guys like me were "in what we call the reality-based community," which he defined as people who "believe that solutions emerge from your judicious study of discernible reality." I nodded and murmured something about enlightenment principles and empiricism. He cut me off. "That's not the way the world really works anymore," he continued. "We're an empire now, and when we act, we create our own reality. And while you're studying that reality -- judiciously, as you will -- we'll act again, creating other new realities, which you can study too, and that's how things will sort out. We're history's actors . . . and you, all of you, will be left to just study what we do."

It is quite possible that this is the core issue of the sustaining psychology required for sustainable development and sustainable patterns of consumption. The issue of who is now entitled to think of themselves as "we" is discussed below.

The above quote helpfully recognizes that the static transitional object engendered by conventional "project logic" (***) may indeed hold the attention and be given questionable permanent significance (as closure). However it, perhaps necessarily, fails to highlight:

- the nature of any cognitive invariance sustaining the creative process by which other objects may continue to be produced. Any degree of permanence is inherent in that continuity -- in the process and the sustaining intentionality or question. Indeed such an enduring implicit "question" might even be appropriately written as "quest-i-on" (Am I Question or Answer? -- problem or (re)solution? 2006).
- the nature of any commitment to persuade "others" of the significance of the transitional object and to elicit their commitment to it -- by fair means or foul. The problem is highlighted by the pathetic institutional response of the EU to the Irish "No" vote in 2008 regarding the Lisbon Reform Treaty (cf Reframing the EU Reform Process -- through Song: responding to the Irish challenge to the Lisbon Treaty, 2008)

Radical knowing

Many argue that there is extensive proof of incremental and appropriate development -- the "gradual" approach indicated above. This implies that patience is simply required for its wider consolidation -- notably with respect to stabilization of population levels and the effects of resource overshoot. The financial crisis has undermined that case and the credibility of those who advanced it. Indeed, for whom is it appropriate to "hang about" in expectation of such improvements and the crumbs that fall off the cognitive table of those in authority or claiming a higher level of knowledge?

This is a key question for the deprived and the marginalized confronted in 2008-9 by the swift allocation of vast bailouts to "save" indebted corporations -- resources previously held to be unavailable to "save" the lives of those in developing countries (of of the impoverished more generally).

Curiously supporters of the case for "positive thinking" and "optimism" frequently rely on judgements as to whether a glass is to be described as "half-full" or "half-empty" (cf Peter Ellyard, Designing 2050: pathways to sustainable prosperity on spaceship Earth, 2007). It is interesting that the Klein "bottle" (as discussed in Annex D), in contrast to a sphere or a glass, cannot be used as a metaphorical container in this way. As a surface without inside or outside, it is unable to "contain", and may therefore be a more appropriate metaphor as a "container" for hope than the sphere -- so problematically associated with financial bubbles (as discussed in Annex B).

Are most people now placed in a position of waiting for the institutions of the international community to "lay an egg" -- after decades of proudly "clucking" their announcement of it? Was "globalization" that "egg" or rather the "globality" expected as the outcome of it? Or is it more appropriate to see their many resolutions and projects as their understanding of such "eggs" -- a manifestation of their particular reaching for "globality"?

The argument here is that individuals are increasingly free to engender their own integrative "eggs" -- of potentially higher quality ("organic", "free range", "fresher" ?), of lower cost, or more to their particular taste for "globality". Similarly they are also free to engender any pathway towards such globality (in Varela's terms) -- thereby effectively engendering the "pattern which connects", understood as that globality (Walking Elven Pathways: enactivating the pattern that connects, 2006).

Radical questioning: delinking from detachment

There may indeed be an alternative possibility, open to all, of:

- reframing the moment and its reality as perceived, bringing the phenomena of the moment into a new focus, irrespective of inaccessible knowledge held by others elsewhere (Presenting the Future: an alternative to dependence on human sacrifice through global pyramid selling schemes, 2001)
- acquiring and sustaining a new intuitive understanding of the whole
- direct cognitive engagement with that global reality -- globality -- as inherently abundant

Part of the dynamic explored (as part of Engaging with Globality through Knowing Thyself) is one of attributing and evolving "categories", whatever they are held to be -- whether or not classical labels continue to be used for mnemonic purposes. Such "can do" reframing contrasts with:

- the pattern of acceptance currently promoted and inculcated by authorities
- conventional understandings of whether any understanding is "right" (as opposed to whether, for the "user", it is felt to be right and appears to work)
- expressions of reality framed in the "language" and style of distant "authoritative" others (as opposed to one's own "language")
• forced "buy-in" exemplified by the widespread logic that has sustained:
  • the subprime maneuverings resulting in the financial crisis
  • misappropriation of intellectual property (exemplified by that of indigenous peoples)
  • uncreative cognitive traps associated with particular categories (Metaphoric Entrapment in Time: avoiding the trap of Project Logic, 2000)
• financial world and down to earth -- Ferguson ***

Reality may be more "plastic" and responsive to the manner of engagement with it, as speculatively suggested elsewhere (Beyond Harassment of Reality and Grasping Future Possibilities: learnings from sexual harassment as a metaphor, 1996). Reality, as conventionally defined, may bear greater resemblance to the monetary tokens to which value (and confidence) has been attributed -- as indicated by current solutions to the financial crisis of simply "printing money" (Monopoly money for Monopoly transactions for people trapped in Monopoly games?).

In a sense the process of governments printing money -- as fiat currency -- is one which is open to any group or individual. In other words either is able to declare what they consider to be "currency" in which they have confidence. This goes beyond the widespread exploration of Local Exchange Trading Systems (LETS) or the currencies used in virtual worlds like Second Life. The individual is then, ironically, the currency emitting "authority" for his or her own domain -- backing the currency by whatever "values" or "promissory notes" are considered appropriate..

There is a sense in which each should be freed from the cognitive shackles and torques (of Dimension 2) that restrict their ability to reframe their own sense of integrity and identity -- allowing them to engage with the globality of a larger reality in which they variously understand themselves to be embedded.

This may well involve a degree of cognitive mirroring as explored elsewhere (Self-reflective Embodiment of Transdisciplinary Integration (SETI): the universal criterion of species maturity? 2008)

Cognitive "revolution"

Paradoxically the striking articulation of the worldview of the governance of the Bush regime (cited by Suskind above) now applies to all faced with authority and free to construct their own cognitive "empire" -- to be sovereign of the cognitive domain within their ken. Each individual, to which the "We the people" of the UN Charter refers, is now a cognitive empire builder, suggesting a clarification of the above quote:

We're an empire now, and when we act, we create our own reality [namely as individuals]. And while you're studying that reality [namely as authorities] -- judiciously, as you will -- we'll act again, creating other new realities, which you can study too, and that's how things will sort out. We're history's actors . . . and you, all of you, will be left to just study what we do.

Like Margaret Thatcher and royalty, every individual now has the right to claim to be "we" (in addition to those with multiple personalities, endowed with a tapeworm, or appreciative of the microorganisms symbiotically inhabiting their body). In this sense the Bush regime may be framed as the "Great Cognitive Liberator" enabling every individual to "move on" -- irrespective of the attitudes of those who wish to lay claim to be his or her governor. This possibility gives an additional significance to the hit song We Are the World (1985).

Under the heading "keep moving", Peter Waterman (World Social Forum: the secret of fire, 18 June 2003) offers a relevant description of the World Social Forum in terms of what might be understood as "cognitive fire":

I argued at the second WSF with younger activists from Barcelona and Belgrade that what was about to call itself the "global justice and solidarity movement" (G&SM) had at last discovered the secret of fire. This secret, I suggested, is 'keep moving'.

For a century or more, Robert Michels's "iron law of oligarchy" has afflicted social movement institutions - according to which any movement peak or plateau, any institutionalisation of the movement, will (or should, or could) be immediately challenged.

But now, the Keep Moving Emancipation Show is possible -- thanks to the internet, and the accelerating shift of the site of power contestation, particularly at global level, from the political sphere to that of culture and communications, from the institutions to cyberspace.

The controversial geometrical term "revolution" may be fruitfully contrasted with processes that potentially also have psycho-social significance. These include:

• evolution and devolution, with their biological implications in an increasingly stressed planetary ecosystem on which humanity is dependent -- especially in the current period when "deglocalization" is considered to be an option. Annex B is one approach to holding the cognitive relationship between "globalization" and "deglobalization".
• involution and convolution with their psycho-social implications for the organization and comprehension of complex structures, including self-reflexivity -- especially in the current period, given the convoluted arguments to reconcile the strategies of "globalization" with those of "protectionism" in order to safeguard national economies. Annex C is one exploration of such convolution.

Metaphorically, current socio-political understanding of "revolution" relies naively on an assumption of the desirability of "permanent daylight" -- and battling against the rhythms of "diurnal change" and exposure to "darkness". These other forms of "volution" must
Re-appropriation of cognitive property

It is curious the degree to which authorities have laid claim to categories of individual experience. This direct, integrative experience has been fragmented into a jumble of categories over which authorities claim the right to make definitive assertions -- effectively appropriating that experience as "cognitive property", subjecting it to their control. Over it they establish rights in their interactions with other authorities. This echoes historical processes with respect to geographical territory: "tragedy of the commons", "clearances" and limiting individual use of property, possibly to "squatters rights".

However, through the cognitive liberation offered by the Bush regime, individuals are now free to re-appropriate that cognitive property, organizing and naming it as they will -- as envisaged, in effect, by Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948):

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

Within such terms, individuals are therefore free to extend such an understanding as outlined in the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Human Organization -- an experimental extension of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1971)

There is of course nothing to preclude any number of individuals from organizing and naming experience as they prefer. As discussed elsewhere (Cognitive psychology of ownership and possession of property, 2007), the strategic importance of "giving ownership" is recognized in political programmes, in business, as well as in ensuring "buy-in" in support of community development. The psycho-political concept of "buy-in" may be considered in relation to a developmental vision -- effectively a framework within the poly-sensory spectrum noted above (cf Mark S. Walton, Generating Buy-In: mastering the language of leadership, 2003).

This raises questions about how one makes a framework "one's own". Interesting examples of this at the collective level are provided by the process of land nám, coined by Ananda Coomaraswamy (The Rg Veda as Land-Nama Book, 1935), to refer to the Icelandic tradition of claiming ownership of uninhabited spaces through weaving together a metaphor of geography of place into a unique mythic story. This territorial appropriation process, notably practiced by the Navaho and the Vedic Aryans, was further described by Joseph Campbell (The Inner Reaches of Outer Space: metaphor as myth and religion, 1986):

Land nám ("land claiming or taking") was [the Norse] technical term for this way of sanctifying a region, converting it thereby into an at once psychologically and metaphorical Holy Land.... Land nám, mythologization, has been the universally practiced method to bring this intelligible kingdom to view in the mind's eye. The Promised Land, therefore, is any landscape recognized as mythologically transparent, and the method of acquisition of such territory is not by prosaic physical action, but poetically, by intelligence and the method of art; so that the human being should be dwelling in the two worlds simultaneously of the illuminated moon and the illuminating sun. (p. 34)

Clearly there is a strong case for reclaiming any aspects of individual experience over which others have effectively staked claims. The issue of multiple or conflicting claims is then to be recognized as a product of low-dimensionality thinking. The difficulty does not exist if the dimensionality is increased -- as is suggested by time-sharing and the self-indulgent multi-dimensionality of physics. The approach might offer important clues to new strategies in the Middle East (And When the Bombing Stops? Territorial conflict as a challenge to mathematicians, 2000). What conflicts would not be fruitfully resolved in the 26 dimensions of string theory?

Echoing the current process of indigenous peoples, this reappropriation then involves staking claims to the cognitive "land" -- its "mineral rights", "water rights", "agricultural rights", "grazing rights", etc -- as the individual historical cognitive dweller on that land. Of particular relevance, in the light of the cognitive engagement of many indigenous peoples with the land, is their contrasting view as "stewards" of that land and its ecosystems rather than as "owners" of them (Darrell Addison Posey, Cultural and Spiritual Values of Biodiversity, 1999).

Withholding "cognitive accreditation"

Whereas government has hitherto imposed taxes on individuals to sustain a pattern of confidence (that has been so radically betrayed) in a financial system, individuals are now empowered to reverse the situation and impose a form of cognitive "tax" on governance. This might be understood as a "Principle of Reciprocity", as recognized in social psychology, international relations or business.

Just as the International Monetary Fund has imposed measures of conditionality on loans to countries, individuals (as sovereign "empires" in their own right) are now able to envisage measures of cognitive conditionality under which (for an appropriate period) they may buy into forms of reality as framed by authorities through various categories. Any confidence in such framing by authority would then be necessarily measured and partial -- in the light of the tried and tested disciplines of the IMF and its authoritative austerity measures.

Intriguingly the disciplinary insights of economics then apply more generically to the economy of trust and confidence in any exchanges, most notably with respect to any economy of truth. Just as UNICEF endeavoured to ensure that a "human face" was placed on those austerity measures, so it is appropriate that the "human face" should require a higher degree of "austerity" from those that claim authoritative knowledge (Richard Jolly, Adjustment with a human face: a UNICEF record and perspective on the 1980s, World
The challenge for the individual is to reappropriate by their reductionist use of it. This commitments previously made (notably confessions Criminal Court argument is the so-called Happiness Paradigms via a Renewed Set of Prefixes? Dependence of international policy-making frame it. The cognitive implications of other prefixes associated truth following expression of time, such authorities attach fundamental importance to the "economy"? It is perhaps justified by the sentiment of the hit musical "Stop the World - I Want to Get Off" (1961).

Categories proposed by authorities, perhaps best understood as "vendors", may then be "exploitatively internalized" (and possibly framed as primary commodities) through any transformation considered to be of relevance. This of course echoes the historical process of exploitation of such commodities -- from which much may be learnt. Alternatively however, such categories "on special offer" (and subject to "copyright"), may simply suggest the invention of other patterns -- perhaps to be understood as an exercise in cognitive plagiarism and the development of "generic" variants. Who indeed is to detect such initiatives as "counterfeit" or a feature of the "black economy"?

It is curious that in the efforts of authorities to claim to be "de-signing" the future -- as in 2009 with respect to the new version of the Bretton Woods financial system -- this implies the "as-signing" of roles and function to many with little to say in the matter. At the same time, such authorities attach fundamental importance to the "signing" by individuals -- as both a mark of their identity and as an expression of their identification with whatever is proposed or required by authorities (and notably as a culminating acknowledgement of truth following interrogation). Hence the merit of any reflection on "re-signing" from the "de-signing" of the future as they choose to frame it. The cognitive implications of other prefixes associated with this seemingly vital process could also be considered (New Paradigms via a Renewed Set of Prefixes? Dependence of international policy-making on an array of operational terms, 2003; Happiness and Unhappiness through Naysign and Nescience: comprehending the essence of sustainability? 2008). Relevant to this argument is the so-called "un-signing" of the USA and Israel, in 2002, from the treaty establishing a global tribunal, the International Criminal Court, to ensure the global embrace of law (John B. Anderson, Unsigning the ICC, The Nation, 29 April 2002). Again this may be seen as a remarkably innovative form of leadership -- which individuals can see as a precedent indicating how they can "un-sign" any commitments previously made (notably confessions made under what may be framed as duress).

Re-engage with the "universe"

This more personalized cognitive universe may well be experienced as much subtler than is claimed by those who assert the exclusivity of their authoritative right to possess knowledge of globality -- whether as physicists, philosophers or priests, all variously compromised by their reductionist use of it.

The challenge for the individual is to reappropriate the interface with larger understanding, avoiding the cognitive traps so helpfully
marked by the history of religions and academic disciplines -- all with their many schisms and ego-games (so skillfully denied).

By the same token, the potential disempowerment by claims of distant knowledge of a higher order can "realistically" be set aside -- as with any purportedly relevant technology inaccessible for whatever reason. Claims by authorities that more powerful and appropriate cognitive tools are available elsewhere -- under their auspices -- may be viewed as only of potential relevance (whether or not they are appropriately considered suspect).

**Such is the scope and complexity of the knowledge universe, that individuals will be increasingly required to act with the knowledge base to which they have immediate access** -- in the light of their current cognitive skills -- rather than vainly engage in some heavy investment in time and resources to obtain hypothetically relevant insights, claimed to be of value by those whose credibility (as "vendors") may rightfully be doubted. This is especially the case when such claims are covert exercises in deliberate (or inadvertent) disempowerment, whether or not they are vigorously asserted to be a means of empowerment and in the best interests of the individual (as was claimed for the financial system prior to 2008 by the international institutions complicit in sustaining it).

Again the possibilities of such "re-engagement" have been discussed in *Creative Cognitive Engagement: beyond the limitations of descriptive patterning* (2006) -- as an annex to *Governance through Patterning Language: creative cognitive engagement contrasted with abdication of responsibility* (2006).

The argument is developed further in **Dimension 4: Engaging with Globality through Knowing Thyself** (2009) in terms of *Engendering categories: self-constraining world-making and system building*.

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