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Configuring Conceptual Polarities in Questing

metaphoric pointers to self-reflexive coherence

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Introduction

The following exercise in thinking about thinking is an effort to identify a higher degree of order in the set of papers produced by the author in the period from 1962-2004 (as discussed separately in *Self-reflexive Learnings from Writing*, 2004). As a preliminary, the papers have been separately ordered by a set of value polarities which they may implicitly address (see *Distinguishing Emergent Conceptual Polarities: experimental ordering of a collection of research papers*, 2004)

This is seen as suggesting a methodology that could be applied to other bodies of work. The set of polarities is explored here, as a challenge to comprehension, through a set of complementary metaphors that may usefully point to the nature of that higher order. The metaphors are then used to clarify the nature and intent of the writing process itself.

Metaphoric pointers

The set of polarities identified (see *Distinguishing Emergent Conceptual Polarities: experimental ordering of a collection of research papers*, 2004) raises the question of whether there is any useful way of understanding their significance as a set, notably through the use of metaphor. In the light of arguments elsewhere, it is assumed that no single metaphor is sufficient and that what is required is a set of complementary metaphors that can together point to various forms of coherence that may order the set of polarities. It is also assumed here that the set of metaphors should be of requisite variety.

- **Exercise bars:** Each polarity may be thought of as an exercise or trapeze bar (or perch). This holds the tendency to move from emphasizing one position to another position (between bars) or to shift in relation to the polarity (along the bar, from one end to another). Sets of bars are typical of bird and other cages (and are called monkey bars in children's playgrounds). In the wild, branches of trees offer analogous experience. The challenge in the design of any cage is to provide a sufficient variety of bars and perches to keep the animals occupied and to allow for territorial and other forms of behaviour. (??Atkin)

- **Containers (cages and baskets):** The polarities may also be understood as constituting the bars of a cage, or the fencing posts of a stockade, that prevent an animal from escaping. The cage may also be designed as a trap, notably as identified by Geoffrey Vickers ("A trap is a function of the nature of the trapped"). Designs tend to have a circular plan formation (stockades) or a spherical three-dimensional form (cages). This metaphor holds the sense of difficulty in escaping from the set of polarities that define behaviour and attitude. Certain forms of basket, made from weaving reeds, give a sense of the potential complexity of the interrelationship between the polarities -- to the point of obscuring completely any perspective beyond the container, in part through focusing attention on the aesthetic design of the container. (see also *The Future of Comprehension: conceptual birdcages and functional basket-weaving*, 1980)

- **Containers (shelters):** The simplest shelters (including huts, teepees and yurts) are combinations of interlinked or interwoven poles to which some covering is added to seal the shelter from the elements. Structured as a stockade, the shelter may be primarily designed for protection against external dangers (animals, enemies). Shelters may also take the form of boats (or arks) to provide a means of transport and the ability to survive flooding. This holds the need for a protected environment in which more delicate and vulnerable processes can occur.

- **Containers (unstable contents):** Some containers, such as "magnetic bottles", use features of polarization to retain substances that would be denatured by contact with conditions beyond the container walls. Magnetic bottles are used to contain plasma under high pressures and temperatures in order to achieve nuclear fusion. Magnetic polarization effects are used dynamically to prevent the plasma from coming into contact with the walls of the bottle by which it would be quenched. In effect they function like a kind of spherical stockade. This holds the sense that transcendental insights cannot be identified with polarized awareness.

- **Dynamic protection:** The disciplines of some forms of protective behaviour, exemplified by the quarterstaff, constantly reposition a single pole to ward off attack -- or as an instrument of attack. Operationally this dynamic is somewhat analogous to the function of a magnetic bottle in that the quarterstaff is then effectively redefined by the positions and angles at which it is successively placed, and how it is held, to constitute a protective shield or container for the wielder (see discussion in *Evoking Authenticity: through polyhedral global configuration of local paradoxes*, 2003). Here the multiplicity of poles in the previous metaphors is replaced by the dynamic redefinition of the function of the quarterstaff as a kind of archetypal polarity. This holds the understanding that polarization, in the abstract, may manifest perceptibly in a variety of settings in response to circumstances.

- **Antenna array**: The detection of very faint signals of significance, from afar, can be achieved by configuring wires over a -- possibly extensive -- array of poles. The array as a whole serves as a means of detecting and focusing the signal -- bringing it to a central point. This metaphor holds the sense in which it is not any specific polarity that is of greatest interest, or the configuration as such, but the manner in which they collectively capture elusive signals relating to another order of meaning. There is a degree of detachment from the tangible features and patterning of the array.

- **Polyhedral tensegrity**: Such structures, constituted by poles and strings interlinked to form a spherically symmetrical polyhedron (in which the poles do not touch), combines features of several of the above. It has the form of a container, similar to a cage. Suitably covered it may be used as a shelter (as with geodesic domes). The many differently angled poles could be seen as a static representation of the many defensive positions of a quarterstaff (as noted above with respect to dynamic protection, especially since the integrity of the tensegrity derives from its characteristic structural dynamics). As a metaphor it holds, at a high level of articulation, a configured dynamic relationship between polarities -- constituting a three-dimensional map.

- **Geometric patterns:** Such patterns are extensively used in the decoration of sacred buildings, notably in the case of mosques.

- **Musical instruments**: Many musical instruments depend on the interrelationship between pole-type features (gongs) and strings (guitars), notably including the wind harp. This metaphor holds the sense in which sets of polarities, in one form or another, may be "played", most simply as illustrated by plucked strings emitting different notes depending on their length and where they are plucked.

- **Codification systems:** A number of notation and coding systems are based on the configuration of rods, possibly of different type, notably as in the case of the *I Ching*.

As a set, or progression, the above metaphors might be considered as primitive equivalent to the renowned Zen ox-herding pictures -- as exemplifying the evolving relationship of containment and identity. Such metaphors point towards processes of insight capture (discussed below) as suggested by:

- grammatical forms as thought containers, in the light of the conceptual "storage" function performed by nouns and verbs
- constructs or complexes as providing "sites" (in the molecular sense) to hold particular insights and perspectives
- the definition or delineation of particular conceptual spaces as "fields" of study or concern, raising questions about the distinct processes that occur in different fields
- the manner in which fields are fenced off and separated from one another by "boundaries" to the point of constituting "territories" and evoking territorial behaviour
- the cross-disciplinary and associative connections between fields in terms of "pathways" and other, possibly more structured, routes -- including notions of an information "highway" and the potential of hyperlinks in a semantic web
- the manner in which conceptual territory may be "owned" and "possessed" as "property"
- the relative importance attached to particular fields due to their relative location (recalling the real estate adage of "location, location, location")
- the insights of self-reflexiveness in which internal and external realities mirror each other (see Mark Pendergrast. *Mirror, Mirror: A History of the Human Love Affair with Reflection*, 2004)
- the embodiment of complex conceptual structures (in the sense of Francisco Varela et al. *The Embodied Mind*, 1991 and the understandings of enactivism) and their generation (Francisco Varela. *Laying Down a Path in Walking: essays on enactive cognition*).

Processes of reflection and "insight capture"

In the light of the above, the processes and intentions of reflection may be explored in the light of different clusters of metaphor. In a knowledge-oriented society, these metaphors are especially relevant in relation to information organization and processes.

Building metaphors, where the focus is on conceptual constructs and protection from the elements:

- **Building a house** with pole-like elements: Here the focus is on fitting poles, as isolated elements, into a structure of greater complexity. Skill is required to know where to fit the added poles to ensure that a space is contained -- allowing for points of

entry and exit. As the structure increases in complexity, polarities may be abstracted into tension and compression elements. In conceptual terms, the challenge is to discover ways of combining polarities so that they define a contained conceptual space. As with a shelter, the structure may serve to contain a single space -- possibly providing links to contiguous contained spaces to constitute a "mansion" or a "palace". In psycho-behavioural terms the questions are: what does a shelter actually do, how does it function, how is it experienced, and what is the need for it.

- **Construction of pathways**: Paths, roads or autoroutes need to be constructed between the location of buildings, groups of buildings, or fields. In the case of knowledge space, there is an equivalent need to build "associative links", "hyperlinks" or "information highways" to provide connective tissue between otherwise fragmented fields of knowledge. Such pathways also need to be constructed so that they are protected from the elements and are not eroded or destroyed by them.

- **Construction of bridges**: Roadways may encounter obstacles that cannot be bypassed and have to be bridged. This requires an entirely different set of skills -- that increase with the width of the obstacle and the height at which the bridge must be placed. In the conceptual case, the construction of "bridges" between two distinct fields of endeavour calls upon the skills of cross-disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity. Typically the challenge is much greater as the differences increase -- when the preoccupations are "wide apart".

- **Construction of a vehicle:** In order to travel rapidly along a roadway, protected from the elements, and with the capacity to transport a load, appropriate vehicles may be constructed. The most basic rely on parallel sleds to support a platform that can be pulled. More sophisticated vehicles make use of wheels, whether one (in the case of wheelbarrows), two (in the case of chariots, simpler carts, and bicycles), or four (as in the case of automobiles and trucks). Developing appropriate "vehicles" can be important to effective communication and the delivery of messages -- as in the notion of a "communication vehicle". This is of great concern to media specialists. Such vehicles are designed to hold the conceptual content as it is transported by the media to the receiver. In Buddhism the term 'vehicle' is understood as a conveyance of deliverance for sentient beings. Five such vehicles are distinguished [more]. Through cultivation of insight according to the teachings of these vehicles, one is conveyed or ferried from one shore to the other -- from the present shore where there is an abundance of affliction and suffering of birth and death, to the shore where there is bliss and enlightenment.

- **Construction of a vehicle (boats)**: A boat is a vehicle designed for transport over water. It combines some of the design features of a shelter, especially the need to exclude water. As with a shelter, the role of interlocking of pole-type elements can be basic to the construction -- as evident in a raft as the most basic form of boat. The conceptual equivalent becomes evident in the case of any need to be protected from a "sea of emotion" by the design of a vehicle to "float" upon it. Meditation, possibly assisted by ritual chanting, may also be used to engender spiritual "vehicles" to float upon the "mind chatter" of "internal discourse" regarding mundanities.

- **Construction of a vehicle (airplanes):** Airplanes (as with boats) are typically constructed like a container using interlinked pole-type elements. A key feature is the use of such elements in the construction of wings to obtain lift. In the case of knowledge space the challenge is to develop conceptual constructs which "fly" as opposed to "crashing" -- a concern that is notably evident in the case of projects. A project that "flies" is one that "takes off" and can sustain itself within some consensual socio-cultural or knowledge space.

- **Construction of a vehicle (spaceships)**: In this case the focus is constructing a vehicle that can develop escape velocity in order to get into a stable orbit, whilst ensuring a context that can sustain life in the hostile space environment. These requirements all stretch normal technical capacities. In the conceptual case, the challenge is to develop the capacity to escape the constraints of conventional modes of thought and to be able to enter a stable dynamic relationship detached from them. There is also the challenge of ensuring sustainable conceptual processes in that environment. (see also *Entering Alternative Realities -- Astronautics vs Noonautics: isomorphism between launching aerospace vehicles and launching vehicles of awareness*, 2002)

- **Construction of a musical instrument:** As noted above, many musical instruments are constructed by ensuring suitable arrangements of pole-type elements (as in gongs that can be struck, or strings that can be plucked). The pattern of sounds so created, the soundscape, effectively establishes an aesthetic container. In the conceptual case equivalent forms of "play" have been envisaged in such works as Hermann Hesse's *Glass Bead Game* (1943). Thinking may be described as a form of abstraction, a withdrawal from involvement with objects into a state of mind in which "playing with concepts" becomes possible [more]. However Hesse's musical dimension, involving notions of consonance and dissonance to build conceptual harmony, is not necessarily present in other notions of "playing". It is however this dimension, involving composition, that provides for integrative associations, also present in some poetry (see also Asaf Friedman and Israel Idalovichi *Conceptual Organon*).

- **Construction of a memorial:** Memorials are necessarily constructed to be durable over time, with some lasting thousands of years. In the conceptual case, many are concerned with "making their mark", ensuring a "place in history", or "planting their conceptual genes".

Agricultural "development" metaphors, where the focus is on provision of sustenance:

- **Draining of swamps and wetlands**: Equivalents to this process in the conceptual case occur in a fresh response to murky fields of knowledge to which "swamp" may well be applied as a metaphoric descriptor. Typically these will involve situations in which conceptual clarity is undermined by a significant degree of emotionalism.

- **Clearing the land**: Where a potential field of knowledge is cluttered with structures and concepts considered irrelevant or obsolete, a first step in developing the field may require the removal of such structures. This may be described as "preparing the ground".

- **Irrigation of fields:** Agriculture may require particular attention to availability of water, its conservation -- and possibly the handling of waste water. A major challenge to the productivity of a field of knowledge may be that it is perceived as "arid" or lacking any affective dimension. Public relations techniques may typically be used to give a "human dimension" to abstract fields of study such as particle physics, molecular biology, or astrophysics -- notably to ensure the support of voters in ensuring allocation of funds by reference to the implications for human health, food supplies, etc. Public relations may thus be understood as a means of "irrigating" conceptual undertakings.

- **Sustainable production:** A prime concern with agriculture (including animal husbandry) is to ensure that it provides sustainably for sustenance and nourishment -- if only through subsistence farming. This may require particular attention to the interdependencies (highlighted by permaculture) between soil preparation, planting and crop rotation (see *Sustainable Cycles of Policies: Crop Rotation as a Metaphor*, 1988). An equivalent challenge in the conceptual case is ensuring that preoccupation with a field of knowledge provides adequate personal sustenance, whether as a professional concern requiring external funding or as an inspiring hobby. Research groups are notably dependent on ensuring the sustainability of their undertaking.

- **Energy resources:** More sophisticated forms of, typically intensive, agriculture may be dependent on the supply of energy (eg for heating, cooling, pumping and other machinery). Assessing their value requires a focus on efficiency and productivity. In the conceptual case, use of research resources is increasingly evaluated according to analogous criteria of efficiency and productivity -- and the effort required.

- **Pests**: Agriculture may be especially vulnerable to wildlife (elephants, deer, etc) or insects (locusts, aphids, etc), against which protective measures (culling, pesticides, etc) have to be developed if crops are to be viable. Some animals, such as bees, are however vital to pollination processes. In the development of any conceptual preoccupation, "wildlife" tend to take the form of invasive, uncontrollable, alternative perspectives. These may be demonised to mobilize and focus action against them, although some may have a vital role to play in forms of "cross-fertilisation" important to the productivity of a field of knowledge.

- **Gardening**: Here the focus may be on the aesthetics of plants -- in terms of flower scents, displays and their appropriate placement, or the development of collections, including rare species. Culture and its development may be considered the equivalent in the conceptual case. Here the focus is on the array of complementary concepts to which a person has access and amongst which the subtlest associations may be appreciated (see *Knowledge Gardening through Music: patterns of coherence for future African management as an alternative to Project Logic*, 2000). This is exemplified by Hermann Hesse's *Glass Bead Game* (1943) and the archetypal woman or man "for all seasons".

- **Zoological gardening**: There is a major challenge to holding a range of undomesticated animals in any coherent system. This can obviously be achieved by caging them separately in a zoo or a menagerie -- effectively containing each in what amounts to a laboratory environment. Conceptually this points to the challenge of embodying an ecosystem of a wide variety of processes such that each constrains and sustains others.

Journeying metaphors, where the focus is on displacement:

- **Life as a journey**: George Lakoff (see *Lakoff on Conceptual Metaphor*) analyzes a purposeful life as a long-term, purposeful activity, and hence a journey. Goals in life are destinations on the journey. External events may be impediments toward life goals.

- **Love as a journey**: Lakoff also analyzes events in a love relationship as special cases of life events. It is characterized by two lovers, who are travelers, and the love relationship is a vehicle. Because the lovers are in the same vehicle, they have common destinations, that is, common life goals. Relationship difficulties are then impediments to travel.

- **Career as a journey**: Again Lakoff analyzes a career as a special instance of the life as a journey metaphor.

- **Spiritual questing**: The quest remains an important metaphor because its structure mirrors the quest of humanity searching not only for wisdom and truth, but also values worth believing. As the goal of a quest, the Holy Grail, for example, is purported to have the power to endow unending life, demonstrating that the search for knowledge to vitalize meaning, purpose, and value in daily life, remains of ultimate importance

- **Dream journaling**: This is a method, originally articulated by Jung (and notably promoted as the Progoff method.), of regularly documenting dreams as a record of an inner life journey.

- Space travel:
- Time travel:
- All-terrain travel (between fields)

Relationship metaphors, where the focus is on how design features relate to one another:

- **Eye movement** in which the eye continually scans from point to point over the field of view, effectively establishing and maintaining a protective shield as with the movement of a quarterstaff (discussed above). It might be argued that thinking is characterized by a similar viewpoint-to-viewpoint movement between concepts.

- **Design** may be understood as ensuring "goodness of fit" (cf Christopher Alexander. *Notes on the Synthesis of Form*, 1964), namely ensuring appropriate relationships between objects. This is extended, notably in the fundamental sciences, into a recognition that theories characterized by a degree of elegance in their formal relationships tend to have a higher probability of being correct.

- **Kinship patterns**, in which the person recognizes their position within a network of relationships. The conceptual equivalent might be understood in terms of the network of peers, notably described in terms of "invisible colleges", or mutual citation networks.

- **Partnerships**, especially in the form of marriage and its consummation, provide a basic metaphor of the complexities of relationship. It was notably used by Francis Bacon to describe the relationship of Man, through the penetrating process of the scientific method, to Nature conceived as a receptive female counterpart. The conceptual dance with reality may however also be understood in terms of the subjective observer and external reality alternating between initiating and receptive roles. Similarly, problematic partnership relationships mirror the range of problematic relationships between an observer and external reality -- even to the point of divorce and mutual alienation (see *My Reflecting Mirror World: making Joburg worthwhile*, 2002). The quality of thinking applied to partnership relationships may engender equivalent, or compensating, dynamics with extrnal reality as a whole.

Self-reflexive coherence through metaphor

The intention here is to explore how the above metaphoric perspectives might be used to (re)frame the set of conceptual polarities identified earlier.

A classic approach -- notably in the East -- to self-reflexive coherence is through the circle, or wheel, as a metaphor. In such a case the polarities are held by the linear spokes which collectively define a curved circumference. Much can be made of the conceptual significance of any "emptiness" at the hub of such a wheel -- as in the classic quotation from Lao Tzu (*Tao Te Ching*): "Thirty spokes share the wheel's hub. It is the centre hole that makes it useful...Therefore profit comes from what is there; usefulness from what is not there".

In such a case, the spokes as polarities are not "observables". They are psychodynamic tensions of dilemmas, experienced from within (or participated in). Chuang Tzu, in another Chinese classic, makes the point that:

> The wise man therefore... sees that on both sides of every argument there is both right and wrong. He also sees that in the end they are reducible to the same thing, once they are related to the pivot of Tao. When the wise man grasps this pivot, he is the canter of the circle, and there he stands while "Yes" and "No" pursue each other around the circumference" (*The Way of Chuang Tzu*, interpreted by Thomas Merton, 1970)

There are other dynamics associated with such a form:

- **Turning of the wheel**: this is considered especially significant in an understanding of the "wheel of life" and its cycles. Through such turning different spokes, or polarities, become a point of focus in relating to external reality

- **Opening and Closing**: such a wheel may be portrayed and understood as a petalled flower (most typically a lotus) with the petals holding the significance of the different polarities. The centre of the flower is a source of sustaining nectar. The flower may open and close -- a process explored in relation to information by Orrin Klapp (*Opening and Closing: strategies of information adaptation in society*, 1978)

- **Configuring tensional integrity**: As noted earlier, spherical configurations of polarities can be well-modelled by tensegrity structures. These are especially challenging to construct since any initial two-dimensional map bears little comprehensible relationship to the integrity of the three-dimensional structure. A two-dimensional map provides an interesting way of representing polarities in wheel formation but is not suggestive of why the structure only acquires its integrity through links between polarities in three-dimensions. The integrity derives in large part from the emergence, as the two-dimensional structure is folded up, of differently angled great circles around the tensegrity -- which necessarily interlock. In contrast to the turning of a single wheel, these point to the possibility of interweaving three-dimensional wheels. They are also indicative of the the kind of stable "orbits" discussed above in relation to the achievement of escape velocity by space vehicles. The satiability of such orbits could perhaps be viewed as resulting from the interlocking of comprehensive, but distinct, conceptual pathways.

- **Extending the pattern**: The circular array of polarities lends itself to extension. This could be done **** Islamic patterns

There are other considerations relating to this wheel-based metaphor:

- **Openness**: ironically the circular configuration of the polarities recalls the earlier metaphor of cage or stockade construction. However in this case the primary significance attaches to the spokes -- unconstrained by an implicit circumference. There is an inherent openness or unboundedness, recalling the structure of Stonehenge -- it is not a cage. The significance of the implicit

circumference is associated with the boundedness defined by the limitations of the polarities.

- **Container**: ironically again, emphasizing the circumference as a container, the earlier metaphor of an ark-like boat suggests an association with the legend of Noah's ark -- in particular the requirement of a man of God to construct an ark large enough to contain pairs of all the animals. Understood as uncontrolled, animal-like behaviours, this gives meaning to the need to bring these together as polarities -- "two-by-two", "clean and unclean" -- and put them "into" the ark (*Genesis,* Chapter 7, verses 15, 24)) [more]. Ordering the polarities in this way may be understood as means of surviving an elemental deluge in order to renew the cycle of life.

- **Monocycle vs Bicycle**: as a means of transport, the challenges of a mono-cycle compared to a bi-cycle are evident. This points to the possibility of understanding the circle of polarities in two complementary modes. The dynamic between them would improve the possibility of balance. An interesting illustration of this dynamic is offered by a classic circular ordering of the 64 hexagrams of the *I Ching*. This may be interpreted in two complementary ways, depending on whether the bottom of each hexagram is considered to be on the outer or inner side of the circle. Arguably they may be understood as alternating between the two interpretations (see *Alternating between Complementary Conditions for sustainable dialogue, vision, conference, policy, network, community and lifestyle*, 1983).

- **Tensegrity within tensegrity**: Just as a two-dimensional wheel can be viewed bimodally, or extended to form an additional range of "petals", or can be folded to form a three-dimensional sphere, the latter can also be developed in ways to model additional forms of conceptual significance. In the case of a tensegrity, certain non-contiguous polarities can be projected from around the circumference until they intersect at points defining a larger circumference sharing a centre in common with that within. This derives in part from the well-known possibility of nesting of the basic polyhedra.

"Stretching a metaphor": In making extensive use of metaphor above, the question this raises is the extent to which any metaphor has been "stretched" beyond a "breaking point." This question is especially interesting in relation to polarities (typically represented by linear rods) -- especially when they are collectively used to define a wheel. The question is given focus in the above discussion of the transition in metaphoric construction from using straight rods (cages, stockades, etc) to the deliberate bending of such rods as a basis for other types of construction (boats, airplanes). It might be argued that the degree of curvature that a rod can tolerate in construction, without breaking, suggests a way of thinking about the degree of stretching to which a metaphor may itself be subjected. The degree of curvature is also relevant to reflection on self-reflexive conceptualization. The curvature of the rod, and the tension under which it is maintained, may be understood as being sustained by associations "tied" to the ends of polarities (simply illustrated in the case of an archer's bow). Such end connections are effectively "associative knots" -- possibly to be understood like hypotheses or theories.

Conclusion

In response to the initial preoccupation regarding thanking about thinking in the writing process over a period of decades, the exploration above suggests that the process might be understood through the interrelationships between the following metaphors :

- **carpet weaving**: The process might be understood as one of weaving richer and more complex carpets or tapestries to furnish a conceptually congenial shelter. Such carpets might even be understood as having functions intuited in the myth of "magic carpets".
- **poetry-making**: Equally it might be understood as one of articulating subtler associations between the disparate features of reality to bind them into a single aesthetic pattern.
- **playing**: Or the process might be understood as the playful exploration of patterns, using the totally contrasting primitive forms of rods (polarities, dilemmas, paradoxes) and strings (associative relationships), to render explicit or comprehensible values that would otherwise remain hidden, implicit or unsaid.
- **journeying**: travelling *****
- **uterine muscles**: The circular configuration of the muscles of the uterus suggests a degree of isomorphism with the magnetic bottle. Their contractions at birth, suggest that configurations of conceptual polarities may be associated with a form of conceptual birth or renaissance (*Challenges of Renaissance: suggestive pattern of concerns in the light of the birth metaphor,* 2003). This understanding relates to the *vesica piscis* (with its *mandorla*), as a classical symbol of the birth passage and the divine feminine.

The recognition of polarities, and the avoidance of being trapped within (or by) any one of them, is an attitude traditionally articulated in Buddhism as the Middle Way: *"Too tight, and it'll break. Too slack, and it'll be loose. Neither tight nor slack, and it will turn out right"*. Characteristically -- as in the polarities of walking -- this avoids avoidance, seeking a balance between attachment and detachment. (see Victor Mansfield. *Time and Impermanence in Middle Way Buddhism and Modern Physics*, 1998; *Classic Buddhist Texts on the Middle Way*). This balance has been explored elsewhere through the dynamics of alternation (*Metaphors of Alternation: their significance for development policy-making*, 1984). Responding to the constraining configuration of polarities points to another mode of being. Whatever the defining metaphor, the stages in the conceptual process may be fruitfully viewed as stepping stones -- models only capable of bearing weight temporarily as part of the dynamic of crossing the river of change. Progress through the above text could also be understood as following the notes in a musical score -- "plucking" or "bonging" (as on a child's xylophone) at each point!

The future may come to think of the conceptual activity in the thinking process over decades as somewhat akin to playing on the many keyboards of a conceptual organ. In this sense, and following Varela's enactivist articulation of "laying down a path in walking", the future is then composed and played into being -- offering far richer dimensions to the meaning of organ-ization (see also *Future Generation through Global Conversation: in quest of collective well-being through conversation in the present moment*, 1997). Varela's

phrase might be reworded as "laying down a score in thinking".

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