

II-14. Looking through the Parts

Categories of human thought are never fixed in any one definite form. They are made, unmade and remade incessantly.

- Durkheim

The jump from 'how' to 'why' is as unsafe as the jump from 'is' to 'ought.'

- David Hume

Representation of reality requires interpretation of the context of the observed (*pratyackh*) in terms of defined criteria. Such interactions provide a measure (*paman*) of the content and context for further reasoning to address concerns. Such interactions are through curiosity-driven generic questions that begin with:

what (individual, entity, category, content),

where (distribution),

when (prior history),

how large (size),

how many (count in numbers),

how long ago (time duration),

why (relationships, actions and consequences)

how (do you know?)

who (says so?) and *why* (should you trust?)

Starting with curiosity and concern the search proceeds empirically. Learning by trial and error is part of the word play as well as the physical exploration by the young of most animals. It is at the core of the modern scientific methods. Such playfulness leads to sensible behaviors and validation based on practice. In contrast, an oppressive feeling of rule-based game (dogma-based-thought and behaviors) is elicited by ad hoc, a priori, free will and other invocations of omnipotent and omniscience.

Certainty about identifiable parts is useful for real-time decisions. In a curiosity driven search one starts with the assumption that what we experience exists and is real. For its representation we interpret the experience and share the underlying reality. All representations consistent with reality are in the sense of "it is so" or "exist." We may not know it all, but by acknowledging the underlying complexity one remains aware of the fact that we have grasp of parts of the world that have significant consequences for us.

A hallmark of the criteria-based empirical approach is that it explores a wide range of perceptions to come to terms with diversity of behaviors. The complexity of the perceived worlds may not be obvious or comprehensible. Yet we can be confident about the parts discerned through practice. Also with room for doubt detours can be corrected without reliance on the unknown or worse.

The journey towards certitudes begin from the perceptions shaped by the extent of the observer interactions with the observed. Of all the beings, humans appear to be capable of the widest range of perceptions: from stone blind to sublime, considerate, and rational. The range of experiences and their representations are also shaped by perceptions. Although not explicitly emphasized in the sciences, the extent and quality of interactions is certainly a consideration to identify a, if not the, *domain of reason and rationality*. We rely on such measures for the statistical evaluation of human behaviors as in learning, education, economics, and social interactions. By some criteria average behavior is the norm of the realized potential. A measure of the unrealized lies in the departures from the norm for the animate as well as the inanimate. Very few may understand what lies beyond, but fewer are willing to do something about it.

Rationality lies in availing choices, making decision, then acting on the decisions. To an extent nurture and culture influence the emphasis and assumptions that shape perception, and more so for the modes of their expression. Thus we speak of seeking knowledge or truth. If the emphasis is on pre-existence or pre-eminence of truth, reality is a mere afterthought. It is possibly an extension of the childhood interactions. With this mindset one looks for something that may be out there, or be known to somebody out there. Hopefully it is already pre-approved for the play. The same view is inherent in the word discovery as in *the discovery of the New World*. As applied to the discovery-of-Americas, it blatantly ignores reality. Not only the land mass existed long before the Vikings or Christopher Columbus set foot, but the land was also the home for millions of people.

Empirical explorations have guided the general well being of human race. It is far more than what can be said about any omniscience experienced by the seers or seekers of *the truth*. Rather than dwelling on the arrogance of *the discovery of truth*, emphasis of empirical interaction and search is on the practice-based alternatives. From this vantage we speak of science-based knowledge. As shared knowledge it has evolved in many places and over extended periods of time. In such contexts with changing inputs and expectations it is far more appropriate and meaningful to talk about degrees of certainty rather than the truth.

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