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The Poetry in Theory, A Treatise on Theories, Models and Techniques of Coaching and Consulting

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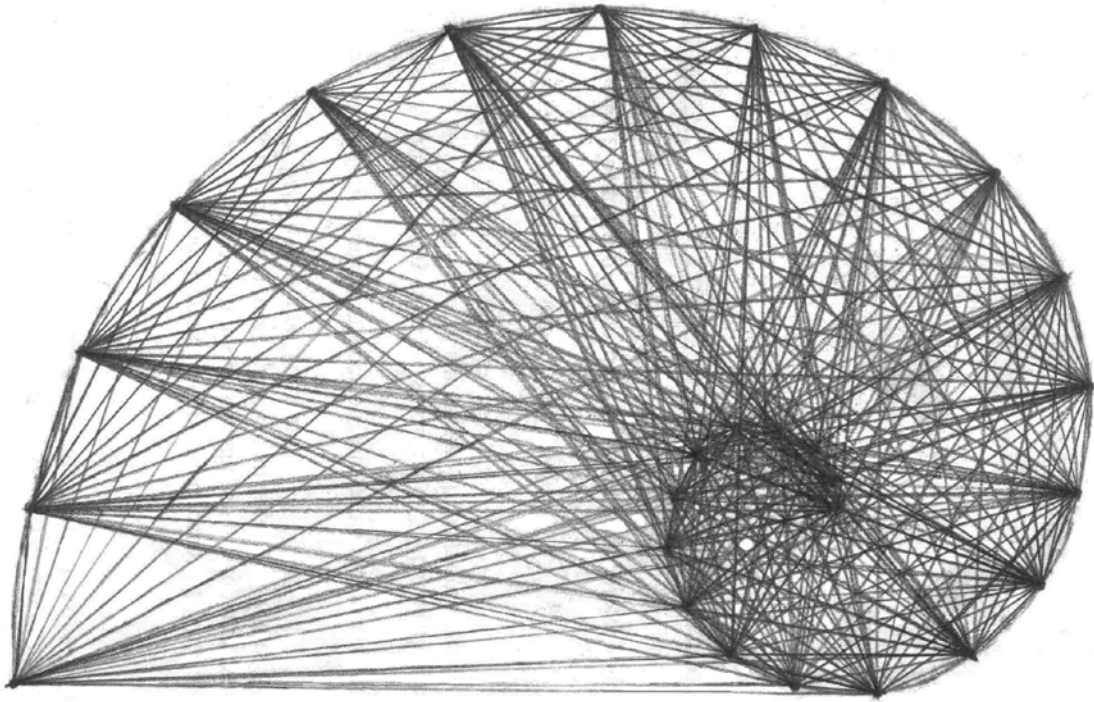
The Poetry in Theory, A Treatise on Theories, Models and Techniques of Coaching and Consulting

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Working Paper #17-02



The Poetry in Theory

Amrita V Subramanian

DYNM 542: Theories, Models and Practices that inform coaching

Dr. Ruth Orenstein

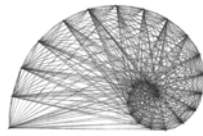
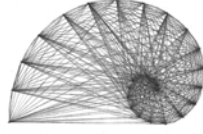


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HYMN OF CREATION

Then was not nonexistent nor existent:

Who really knows?

Who will here proclaim it?

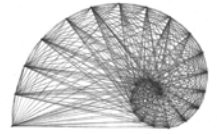
Whence was it produced? Whence is this creation?

The gods came afterwards, with the creation of this universe.

Who then knows whence it has arisen?

Nasadiya Sukta, 10:129-6, Rig Veda

HUMAN THOUGHT



Distant echoes from the primary canonical sacred text of ancient India. Man wonders whence came the Creation. Whence, the first atom.

Philosophers, pundits, thinkers were fused in this common quest, across centuries, in India, China and Greece. The metaphysical realm of ideas and the emergence of constructs riveted the human consciousness. Each body of thought enunciated its own traditions, theorems, texts and territories. Equipoised by tributaries of thought, man mused upon the interconnection between the astronomical, physiological and the spiritual.

In a densely dark void, not resting for an ephemeral breath, spins a beautiful pale blue orb. On its nights, I look up at the billion stars as they struggle to reach my boxed window of a 540 square feet studio. The smog makes it hard for their light to knock on my window and say, *“look up...you and I are the same...even if so far away...”* Writing, I gaze at the centuries of my lineage, not as a gender of a species, but as a golden ratio of Nature. The question in front asks me what informs my weltanschauung (worldview) as someone occupying two square feet of this old, so old, Earth. *Who am I? What is this shadow I cast? What informs my being? What makes me the custodian of the eternal knowledge that has always resided in the collective unconsciousness? What is this reality I live in?*

I have always known it, as a child, as I went about making meaning of this world. Its rules. Its puzzles. The creators of problems and problems of creators. As a highly functional adult, I was given the message of being too deep for corporates. Human organization has always fascinated me. How they come together to serve a purpose and then sometimes gang-up to destroy it! In such scenarios in recent past, I operated from my golden rule. My operant reality being informed by my meaning-making mechanism - perhaps flawed - yet it was my only dependable apparatus. I did not have either knowledge or understanding of *what made things so? What*

can I do about it? The system is what it is, so now what? What makes for certainty in life fraught with increasing isolation, not just from without, but within? Man has grown very alone. Fragmented. Forlorn. His sense of external connectedness pales to a nothingness when he stands alone, face to face, with this universe that continues to expand endlessly. *Is this an acceptable fate for the story of my life on this Earth?*

That single question became my reason to be at University of Pennsylvania. The class on theory was of key interest to me...I approached it with healthy trepidation. I was a practitioner and had seen a botched up view of the pristine. The profitable world of profane has mystified the sacred world of academics. The white high horse does not find friendly audience in corporate corridors, and the erudite neighing of knowledge gets lost in translation of instant fixes of the most readily available scapegoat. Thus goes the cycle of patterns of thought for the old problems, the new ones they create, and their solutions becoming future problems.

It wasn't until in Ruth's class that I finally received an answer: *There is nothing so practical as a good theory!* (Figure.1)

Wise Lewin's articulation became a life line for my curiosity! It piqued me in an untold way...it's true! Life was perpetually creating strange conundrums and with mortal humans just being around for a couple of decades, the skeleton key wasn't as readily accessible. And of course, there were those who would send seekers of the collective unconscious to the English department! Let me not digress.

I chose Systems Thinking (ST) because I sensed what it meant, yet I did not have any familiarity with it (*except through MEC which I had to read quite a few times (A fleeting aside)*). Perhaps the ancient wisdom swirled in my genetic coding but it didn't quite reach the head quartered between the ears. The inquiry led me up trails of metaphysics, philosophy, mathematics, ethics, poetics, astronomy, biology, music, art, medicine, neurology, physics, cybernetics, social science, anthropology...my cranium became the epicenter of tectonic shifts of paradigm, just the way Kuhn meant it. I would often text my partner, Carmen, to help meld my brain back. The mind maps were all over my walls with strings crisscrossing the room, and suddenly... and

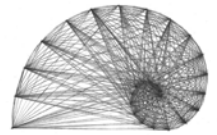
suddenly... and then suddenly again, I would just get it! My husband deserves credit for all the petulance that surged in our little apartment when I would sit with a stack of books, locked in staring competition with its math, until the abstract distilled itself into my way of being. It wasn't enough to just spout the words, you had to soak it up. You had to know the blueprint of its meaning, its context, its force field. They were written in a familiar script of human words, but often their foresightedness would escape me. My encyclopedia of experience is just 35 years old, and though voluminous and observant, I found myself turning to my inner chambers of imagination. The inception of an idea when presented with a newfound notion behaves in a quixotic fashion, and often expression would find its way to me by visualization. To an outside observer of this behavior, it would look like routine dozing off over books or day dreaming! Yet, that's veritable renaissance for an introverted, intuitive being!

The present assignment will serve as my canvas, and on it I will etch my discoveries thus far...it's an evolving work of art. Yet, I am mindful that though I have begun to understand and test my application, I am at an embryonic stage, and so you may sense a coy caution as I draw my arms tentatively around my new found love for theory. These recognitions have been intensely personal, for the only way to really know the theory was to apply it on myself, and sense its ambit of reverberations. Each presentation in the class, presented a lens of a known theory; with each class, I became a little more aware of myself, my history, my emotional palette, transference and countertransference, need to individuate, my erstwhile role in context of an overbounded system where communication and control wreaked predictable havoc, seasonality of my life as a woman and an adult, my thought processes, my choice to lead a meaningful life - with hope and optimism. I learnt my connection in a communal circle - as I shared the same breath of deep inhalation and enduring exhalation, as I bonded with my fellow mates at a deep level - I experienced an equitable equation of curiosity, anticipation and freedom in our quest.

In Theory, lay the poetry of life's innumerable riddles.

I lay before you its meanings as they resonate in me.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE RHETORIC



A riddle we learnt in Descartes' Error of one Phineas P. Gage who had an iron rod javelin its way out of his brain. Unchanged on surface, the man had changed under the skin. This case blew up the fixed division, gifted by dear Descartes, between the mind and body. Antonio Damasio chronicles the story in an absorbing way, revealing the deep neural connections between drives, instincts, thoughts, emotions, range of behavior, decisions, choices- at a microscopic level - and we begin to understand that a human being is indissociable as an organism; the body impacts the brain just as much the parts and the body, together and individually, inform the mind to enact its part in a context whose meaning is made in that moment. Our sense of Self, our role in our environment, are all a matter of interpretation that comes from the neural representations of our understanding of that moment. We construct meaning, and as we age and experience change, versions of our memories evolve. Emotions, feelings, *feeling* of emotions are juxtaposed with the mental images we perceive and then comes the genesis of an impulse to act. The visceral and musculoskeletal state of being as we mind our body; we reason and decide in our personal and an uncertain social space in ever increasing complexity - the evidence of human creativity and its meaning from an evolutionary perspective. We come to know the primordial representations of the body as it serves as a ground reference for the realities we create and live in. Thus, *much can be understood about a person in the way he or she experiences it.* (Kegan, 1982) The choices, the context of the operant reality in which they were born, how meaning is made by the Self, for instance, as when James Joyce's Stephan Daedalus writes:

Stephan Daedalus
Class of Elements
Clongowes Wood College
Gallins
County Kildare
Ireland
Europe
The World
The Universe

A brief study in Piaget's subject-object balancing by humans as we grow through various stages of cognitive development, we sense an equilibration where there is an ongoing colloquy between the individuating organism and the world, the *grammar* of that dialogue. An eternal conversation that is panorganic; and central to the nature of all living things...a sort of dynamic balance that fosters an evolutionary truce. The intriguing expedition of human consciousness as it travels through Kohlberg's three moral stages, maps an upward trail (Figure 2) via a helix of evolutionary truces to finally arrive at Self-actualization, or a near close. Through the immortal history of the very mortal man, I joined the eternal quest to find the true meaning in life and the various theories of various constructs of those truths.

If not 'electricity' that lights up our hitherto dark, inner chambers of being, then perhaps a 'trampoline' that helps beat the gravity of life's ups and downs - that's how I explained Positive Psychology to my husband as I completed my mind map on all that I had researched on the theories. He understands jumping, he used to do it a lot, and hand flapping and rocking. Of course, back at 7 years of age, he hardly knew what Hans Asperger had discovered about all of his unstoppable acts. At 36, he gets it. The social language, the act of being tactful, of learning to be and trust, to laugh politely, to watch the Lilliputian waves on Schuylkill on a mildly windy day, to know that all the risks we have taken to leave behind everything we had earned, to have faith that it will turn out alright and we'll land on our feet. All of it is positive psychology in practice. A dyslexic adult working her learnings through her Aspie best friend, and together our eyes moisten because we get it! We have been living it. (Reference: I have shared some of my mind maps you can see how I travelled the realm of theories.)

Positive Psychology is a theory based on human strengths. The world forgot in the aftermath of World War II that there is much for Psychology to study beyond the broken mind and its manifestations, it has the capability to study in a scientific method the phenomena of human strength and virtues. Dr. Seligman introduces us to the concept via an endearing (and perhaps quite frequently quoted) anecdote of an interaction with his daughter Nikki who called him out on his grouchiness, and thus sprung the yarn of a riveting adventure of all that such a perspective has led to from identifying human strengths by going beyond the disease and DSM;

designing positive interventions and preventative diagnosis at levels of individual, group, organizations and community; enunciating the understanding of subjective well-being and validating the human saga that is embroidered with Creativity, Optimism, Hope, Self-efficacy, Passion to know, Resilience, Toughness, Authenticity, Uniqueness, Humility, Compassion, Forgiveness, Gratitude, Empathy, Partnerships, Altruism, Love and our eternal need to belong, our pursuit of Happiness and Meaningfulness in Life, our coping with loss, our connection with others in our orbit, our negotiation with our reality and illusions, our self-regulation and appraisal of problems of life, our role in our community with its young, growing, and old beings, our medicine and health care, our schools and educational norms, our stance with visible disability and impairments. This rich, deep, nourishing river of human thought brought me face to face with its Mindfulness about our existence and the way we exist (*figure 3*) - with patience, trust, openness, gentleness, generosity, empathy, gratitude, loving kindness, non-judging, letting go and acceptance (Kabat-Zinn(1990) and Shapiro and Schwartz(2000))

Machine as a metaphor was breaking down and a more of humane view was emerging, and towards the end of twentieth century, Martin Seligman and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi etched the theory that emphasizes not only the actualization of the individual but development within the framework of his or her contributions to other people and the world. What followed since were discoveries, reassertions, refocus in the world of academics, researchers and practitioners of hitherto unarticulated theory (though human beings had been practicing it for a few billion years) that spearheaded a new movement of the art and science of well-being.

Kurt Lewin had long articulated that the whole person and behavior as the function of person in interaction with environment ($B = f(P,E)$), and positive psychology thus widened its diagnostic focus to human strengths and the environmental aspects. The experiential lens of Flow told us that a good life is one that is characterized by complete absorption in what one does. Csikszentmihalyi's pursuit of *autotelic* activity as being intrinsically motivated led him to research this subjective phenomenology in skilled chess players, rock climbers and dancers who reported a loss of time, being in a flow, feeling fulfilled and rewarded, and all the while experiencing intense concentration.

The real seers of Emotional Intelligence (EI), Peter Salovey, John D Mayer and David Caruso, were first to ask of the nature of the construct and why EI was so appealing in the eternal quest of a happily, fulfilled life. It pointed to the inherent ability to study emotions, appreciate emotional knowledge, and use it cognitively for decision making. EI instilled hope and promise, and thus shares the tapestry with positive psychology and its way of being. Yet, more on EI later.

The trails of thought and emotion interweave when we look at Self Efficacy, its relation to goal achievement and outcomes, and its place in the power of believing that one can. We assess our psychological adjustment when life's enigmas come face to face, and we have to rise to the occasion. Even though one tends to think of problem solving as an intellectual phenomenon, that myth stands altered. With a systemic view, it calls upon all of human faculties, which use both feelings and thought, to navigate successfully the songs of the sirens. Every emotion tells of a value judgement. Setting priorities in values and goals is critical to managing one's life - this key tenet in critical theories such as Cognitive Behavior and Adult learning, and as a coach I will often find myself using the mixed palette of techniques to get my client from state of an undesired reality to the desired one. If one chooses to view positive psychology from an evolutionary stand, we grasp a continuum that looks at physical and the metaphysical realm of our existence.

Were we to look at Coaching as a Shakespearean play (no doubt some of them turn out to be quite as dramatic), Positive Psychology would play the role of "zeitgeist." This bright colorful fellow would embody all the qualities that are steeped in the faith of goodness and happiness of a human being and the human life.

Yes, there will be nay-sayers and thank heavens for them. They keep us from getting off our kilter. Yes, there is a need for greater statistical, experimental and procedural validity in peer reviews, prudent claims, and yes, one needs more scientific rigor, and predictability and conformity to rules. One does recall that the rules are often reductionist in their purview, and yet, it is set to alter, incrementally, the perceptions. That takes time. We are glad our children and posterity would not consider us a grumpy lot who only looked at what's wrong...for there is so much that is right!

Being right feels right. In 1980s, Reuvan Bar-On coined EQ, Peter Salovey and John Mayer heralded EI, and Daniel Goleman put it on the New York Stock Exchange, in a manner of speaking. Hence proved, EI is not new. The articulation in scientific and modern time, yes, may be. Greeks held on to their Stoic philosophy, Renaissance bounced back with a happy fury, closer Hassidic movement finds repeated mentions, and the oh-so-whimsically-thought-of 1960s. The decade of expression. The rebellion against cold rationalism. The era of political activism, social movements, rage against inequality and women's movement. The natural association of emotionality and personal growth found voice through the humanists, and we have the same names among others: Gordon Allport, Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers who staked that EI had old bloodline in psychology and every study of living system and beings with their environment. It is an organism's innate ability to process emotional information, and yes they were as real as reality can get. Yes, it senses the cultural contexts and puts forth the illuminating personality traits as well.

The emotion system involves internal experiences that arise in response to models of external relationships. The terms sometimes used to denote EI - *emotion, motivation, cognition, and consciousness* - are typically considered in personality psychology as four basic processes that make up the personality's near-biological foundation (Mayer, 1995a; 1998). As of today, with Daniel Goleman's participation, EI compass has five directions: knowing emotions, managing emotions, motivating oneself, recognizing emotions in others and handling relationships. While the definitions differ, it is not quite always clear whether it is an *outcome* or an *aptitude*. The construct, in a broad way, looks at understanding one's feelings and managing their behavioral expression and can be operationalized at distinct levels: (1) the underlying processes that support emotional management; (2) the behaviors that implement emotion management; (3) the outcomes of instances of emotion management (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). The processes, behaviors and outcomes find a conceptual framework needed for hypothesis testing.

The levels of emotional awareness at a neurological, psychological and social milieu is conceptualized as a domain of cognitive development that unfolds in a manner parallel to that of intelligence in the usual cognitive

sense. Emotional experience becomes more differentiated and integrated with development, transforming the representation of the emotional states from implicit to explicit forms. There are many competing models of EI that exist to say how is Phineas Gage deficient in his ability to process emotional signals while performing impeccably on cognitive tests. In the trinity of Intelligence, Emotion and Creativity, we are forced to think in a trans-disciplinary way. Many of the problems that we face as a contemporary society (for instance ethnic prejudices, overpopulation, and pollution) require change in the way we creatively respond to these urgent systemic conundrums.

Human beings with *learning* orientation often believe that knowledge expands and find it non-threatening. They get a good read on themselves, on their teams, and learn to influence and regulate both themselves, their environment and their goals. Now Alexithymia casts a somber shade when that is absent. Its construct goes back to clinical reports by Ruesch (1948) and Maclean (1949) who observed that patients suffering from so-called classical psychosomatic diseases show an apparent inability to verbalize feelings. Thirty years hence, and more evidence along the way, Sifneos's coined *alexithymia*, it denotes difficulty in identifying feelings and distinguishing feelings and bodily reactions; in describing feelings to other people; in using imagination and have an externally oriented cognitive style. There is a direct effect on client's orbit of relationships, personal, interpersonal, empathy and other multiple intelligences that Gardner speaks of (Gardner, 1983). For a client, acquiring knowledge of one's own emotions is dependent on the ability to learn from observations of other people. This is where it becomes relevant for coaches to have an integrated outlook and appreciation for the critique of each theory and its construct(s) (figures 4 & 5).

The movement from IQ to EQ, from EQ to EI, tells of a fascinating story. An academic definition has rules, and is quite stringently so. As a practitioner, I travel from Social intelligence and its multi-method-multitrait approaches, contrasting a non-psychometric approach and its overlap with EI, or say muse over EI as a cognitive ability, the concept of practical intelligence – I find myself standing at the unfinished dilemma of integrating all those defined intelligences with tacit knowledge that rests within the workgroups, community,

the collective unconscious - I understand that it's all a matter of where your vantage point is. How you look at it, and for what purpose - will get you what you want as a coach. Especially when you come face to face with highly intelligent people making abysmally poor decisions!

Yes, EI's fame begets a handy harangue for those in the opposing camps. They ask - *what does it mean? How do we measure? Is it just old constructs with new names? What is the overall validity and utility? What about the enormous claims of being the ultimate intelligence? Who has a final word on it?*

Salovey and Mayer are quite insistent that MEIS and MSCEIT are the ones that Sherlock Holmes would use, if the indeed the need arose. I wonder what Sherlock's own report would state for his phenomenal observation skills. His penumbra of visibly absent emotions is quite well known. As coaches we are nothing less, perhaps not quite as handsome as Jeremy Brett, but we are on a quest for verity too! We become the containers of our client's emotions and if we were not as tuned-in, it portends disastrous cul-de-sacs of our engagement.

The still uncharted-though-oft-invaded realm of leadership is quite distracted by the *soft* side of being. One demands *hard* - a hard objective look at self, hard facts, hard evidence, in hard reality of hard truth...and one so fantasizes that Herr Gustav Jung would send them off with a flea behind the ear! That not being an option, one engages cognitively, the hard wiring of thoughts.

Cognitive Behavior Theory (CBT), as a systemic thinker, stands defined as an *integrative approach which combines the use of cognitive, behavioral, imaginal and problem solving techniques and strategies within a cognitive behavioral framework to enable coaches to achieve their realistic goals* (Palmer & Szymanska, 2007, p.86). Its origin is as illustrious as the very history of mankind! Here's how I see the story: When Consciousness gifted a singular conundrum to man and said, "*Ok, you can now thinkoff you go!*"

Having done so, spectacularly, Nature receded from unconscious control, and let man be. The quest ever since has been that of *reason* and *raison d'être*!

Greeks delivered us from superstition to observation. From *unknown*, we began to explore the known realms of the environment by experiments, drafted laws...created reality and its understanding(s). This was new to man. Thinking, and *thinking* about thinking. Nature helped with all her mysteries. The twin hemispheres on earth developed distinctively. West *classified*, East *mystified*. Each geography of thought reached its own conclusions, own myths, own collective unconscious, own homeostatic socio-cognitive systems - in it, Man of East and West, continued his jaunty ride in the dominion of natural selection. Unknowingly in league, they precipitated an equilibrium of views - Reductionist and the Holistic. At the heart rested Cognitive Processes, surrounded by Epistemology, ensconced in *Metaphysics*, established in *Attention*, manifested in *Social Structure*, resultant *Economy* and *Ecology* of the mind. (Figure 6.)

Human consciousness made meaning. It had to, within multitude of prismatic constructs, it strove to make sense in a context.

Epictetus noted that *men are not moved by things, but by the views they take of them*. Several others in following generations agreed. Descartes and Kant propounded their own exemplars of classical reason and voice of rationality. The quintessential strain was man and his cognition of his environment, his reality, his truth. In centuries closer to us in this moment, we had brilliant minds in the science of psychology (Pierre Janet, Paul Dubois, Alfred Adler, Lazarus) furiously postulating new truths about the human mind and intellect. I will not transgress into therapy, for I am hardly cognizant of its innumerable ideas, what I will render faithfully is what I have learnt of its key figures, application of the theory, diverse techniques and its success.

Albert Ellis and Aaron Beck were the two trailblazers in this realm. Former broke away from his Freudian allegiance and became a renegade of a kind (with Rational Emotional Therapy (RET)), and the other, had quite intimate connections with University of Pennsylvania where he studied severely depressed patients with an aim to change their repetitive thought patterns. David Burns, Beck's mentee explained in a rather savvy way, to the world outside academia, in *Feeling Good: The New Mood Therapy*. The publication of *covert operant* forged

together Ellis's and Beck's experiences. Simply put: CBT says conscious ideas can be treated, observed, manipulated and managed.

The fundamental premise for coaches to take away from CBT would be that whilst we cannot dictate life's predicament, we are the masters of our own thoughts and we can change the view of the reality as we perceive it in this moment. There are three areas of application: (1) *general style of thinking* (2) *specific thinking patterns*, and (3) *specific thoughts*. They arise from the core assumptions that our appraisal of events affects our responses to them; that our internal thought process can be monitored, mapped and altered, and the change in thinking will lead to change in perception of the stimulus, and thus the habitually triggered response. As a method, it demands high self-awareness of the underlying cognitive and emotional barriers. At its core, it has a distinct psychological management model and clients find it easy to learn and adopt. With client as the main focus, *empathy* becomes a critical constituent. The *psychodynamic* and *person-centered* dual model gives tremendous freedom to experiment, observe, modify, monitor, practice, and evaluate.

Of the many, few from the Distorted Thinking patterns that CBT tackles collaboratively and in a structured manner are: *Filtering (magnifying the negative details)*, *Polarized thinking (Black or White - shows up in harsh judgements of self and others)*, *Overgeneralization (from a single incident rises a prophecy for all that is to come)*, *Mind Reading (I think I know what others think and hold my assumptions true)*, *Catastrophizing(perpetual presence of disaster, or imagining 'what ifs?' in an endless loop)*, *Heaven's Reward Fallacy (someone better be keeping my karmic score, and I will be upset if my bounty doesn't come one time!)* (McKay, Davis and Fanning, 2007, p.46-49, *with my own humor!*)

Ellis developed 10 irrational ideas. Rigid and mindless adherence to these caused the problems in interaction and perhaps may sabotage the very goal. A frequent technique in CBT is that of *mental imagery* and *visualization* to review in the inner chambers of the mind the changed reality and then apply it in practice. The aim remains to enable the client be self-sufficient, capable to healthily cope with complex and ambiguous realities, across all spheres of life, and feel cognitively in control.

The business world loves it because its minutiae of measurements, infinite monitoring, task specificity, written, hard evidence with SMART goals, ABCDEF, ABC, SPACE and CLARITY models can work in brief brackets of billable hours, each have plenty of online presence. Coach can often get away by being blatant and the Rogerian *Unconditional Positive Regard* becomes folklore and an inconvenience in face of an immediately needed fix. Sisyphus will shake his head if - *the client is unable to sense her thoughts, feelings and other 'inner' processes* - frustration is just as certain as is the rolling down of the stone. A huge factor that constantly remains out of control is the work environment, and can become a strong hold of support if the sponsoring organization genuinely creates sensitive scaffolding for the new behaviors. Application of CBT is apt for adults in all walks of life, be it by way of coaching for whole life, leadership, business, peer, team, career, health and wellbeing, cross-cultural contexts. Close on its heels comes a critique too about how “*real life*” is an outcome by such a means, and 62% of coaches loudly swear by it! (Palmer et al., 2011) While at odds with a client’s need to face some issues buried in past, or perhaps a quest for deeper meaning by positive or holistic routes to self-actualization – yet, CBT today has generated quite an honest following.

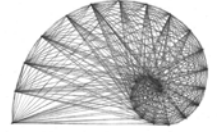
*We shall not cease from exploration, and the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started, And know the place for the first time.
Through the unknown, unremembered gate
When the last of earth left to discover is
that which was the beginning;
T.S. Eliot , Little Gidding*

The epistemological problem - *how we acquire knowledge of reality, and how reliable and “true” that knowledge might be* - occupies contemporary philosophers no less that it occupied Plato. *How do we know what we believe we know?*

What we know is generally considered an outcome of our sensory explorations of the objective reality, the *how* vexes us endlessly. Society then seems to be a paradox! For, in one instance, it's is the most abstract concept designed by humans, and at once the most concrete instance of human agency. This narrative viewed from the eyes of a child varies immensely from that of an adult. As individuals we go through myriad life phases. The ancient Hindu brahminical texts think of *brahmacharya* (0-25 years, celibacy in erudition), *grihastha* (25-50, home and family), *vanaprastha* (50-75, withdrawal from material world into forest, penance and reflection), *sanyasa* (75-100, ascetic abstinence). Zooming in to 1960s, we get a western perspective of the learning preferences and the need for experiential learning. Adults learn for a reason for we reflect on what happens to us. Unlike children, our process of internalization puts a lot by relevance, practicality, self-effacement and self-efficacy. Jerome Kagan, Freud, Jung, Piaget and Erikson's contributions create the cornerstone to all the research and insights around Adult Learning as they are available to us today. The Adult Attachment theory (Bartholomew & Horowitz ,1991) forms a helpful map for navigation for clients as we explore metacognition with them. Gould and Levinson studied adult men and women and the substantive alterations in their consciousness as they transitioned from one *eras* to another, from childhood to early adolescence, early, middle and late adulthood. Sometimes adults get stuck in between *eras* and Levinson calls upon the polarities that need to be resolved. Ethnically, the study was grounded in the white Caucasian race for both genders. A critique that is shared with (what I had referred early on) Kohlberg's model of moral development which is the strongest of its kind in the western worldview.

In coaching, it behooves to sense that my client, as an adult, is capable of empathy, self-reflection, can learn to trust, self-concept and self-worth, comfort with interpersonal range of relationships, varying equations with authority, moral judgement and integrity and the landscape of independence - of thoughts, actions and feelings.

A SACRED UNITY



Having traversed the vast scopes of Positive Psychology, Emotional Intelligence, Cognitive Behavioral Theory and Adult learning, I circle back to where I started with the quest of man and his place on this pale blue orb. With the previous four theories in my narrative, I have gone into a greater depth - for the reason that I did not have a chance to be a part of those teams while making my own meaning of those concepts and it deserved more attention. MEC, Systems thinking, Individual psychodynamics, Group and Intergroup, Organizational Systems were my life for weeks preceding my class presentation. They and I are now eternal partners! I speak of them fondly, even if just a little now (compared to others). I have shared some of my many mind maps as I have learned the theories and their innate cadence. I wonder how other dyslexic adults learn...I wonder...

I am whole. An ecology unto oneself. One lives in as many dimensions, as many levels and interacts with just as many systems and subsystems, just like *Stephan Daedalus of the Universe*. The Multidimensional Executive Coaching (MEC) model is exquisitely lucid for a systems thinker, such as I have begun to accept. The prolific interactions originate in the core, and cuts across all the fluidly trans-mutating layers and strata that exist, simultaneously. All available for you to know if you know *how, where, when, why* and *what* to look. Even the ones they hide or say it doesn't exist!

Within the personal unconscious shadow, Self has esoteric roots in the collective unconscious. The consciousness grants the individual a dialogue within herself, the swirl of feelings and thoughts, she sees and senses the world outside her skin; sometimes the unconscious sneaks out of her and presents a reality of a different kind; she sees another human, she maps the other's identity and draws a correlation of similarity or variance; decides to like or dislike; navigates the unspoken or perhaps she speaks; within a larger collection of humans, she becomes both a part and a whole, the forces that act loudly and quietly on her, of her groups, her history, her inner most beliefs about how the world spins; larger still she becomes a system within a sub-system

and through her play the enthralling paradoxes of group, the sub and the supra-system. Within boundary, real and imagined, she charts her life.

Is behavior a result of the environment, or is it an outcome based on consequences, or both, or is it driven by the meaning-making golden rule of her golden ratio, or is it all of it, the conscious and the unconscious context? *Who is she? What is her role? How is it perceived by her Self and by others? When (within the ever complex organizational milieu) who is she, really? What forces exert her self-perception, self-deception, self-realization? Where is the dysfunctional symptom? Where are its multiple points of origin? What is her "Self" telling her as her truest litmus test, of that which transpires, within her microcosm? What colors her lens? What are the blind spots she doesn't see? What is completely blindsided to her? How does she navigate this wide web if not by looking at it in a multidimensional and systemic way?*

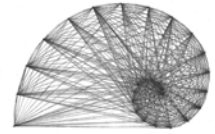
Thus, the ultimate question: **what is my conceptual framework?**

My being records a strong affiliation to MEC with its systems thinking, psychodynamic acuity, intra-and intergroup embeddedness and the rising complexity of systems as it spirals out into the world, outside of organizations and supra-systems. Yet, it's a nascent love. It requires my steadfast attention, investment, nourishing acceptance and constant inquiry.

I have asked, **what happens now? Now that you know how to assimilate theory...**

The plain-spoken voice avows, *read more! learn more! be more!* Be that as it will, I must practice. The insightfully telling mistake that I made in the clinic (last day of the class), when I invited the client, Evelyn, to take a conceptual 30000 feet glance at her reality, I forgot she was embedded and enmeshed in it. I apologized for the discomfort I caused her, and it was ineffective in its outcome, even if the intent was appropriate. Then, I re-learned the *language of translating* the blueprint of theory into the parlance of a client - as I watched you work through the steps in the ensuing conversation. I re-drew my mental map and I integrated the client's version of reality as one of the elements of my intuitive touchstone.

A FLEETING ASIDE



I want to share, very briefly, an anecdote. Evidence of how my fellow classmate (*who doubled up as a client for coursework*) reacted to a framework I had created for our first coaching session. It was a part of Dr. Rod Napier's 360 process. My client's context, which is keenly relevant to my deeply personal discoveries, as I stood swathed in her 360 report:

- Adult : 46 years old, white female, exceptionally successful and displays incredible intelligence, senior researcher in Genetics (Cancer treatment at Penn), highly respected for her technical prowess, role model for career management. At home: a mother of a daughter (20) and son (16), married for 26 years to a surgeon, moderate physical fitness, shy presence, has an amputated thumb, no personal self-care (hassled, hurried, apologetic, out of breath...but not out of humor)
- Her childhood: born with a congenital disorder, dysfunctional home (mother – substance abuse, father – alcoholic), and a younger sibling to protect; mostly without food, water, electricity and extreme poverty. History of physical abuse.
- Here and Now: Short stint with therapy. Admits to a drinking problem.
- Her state of *being*: High state of anxiety, in constant financial distress despite holding 3 jobs, burnt out, always *terrified*. Not suicidal (yet).

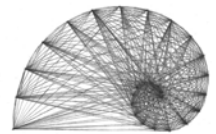
We both knew that she needed therapy, and yet the course demanded that we invest in a coaching phenomenon. I read MEC to her, literally. I wanted her to know how to walk around the data and its meaning – on her own, with me as a facilitator. We were equal – all through.

MEC was my guide for this deep conundrum of her universe. Had I not had MEC model (*figure 7*) to guide me, I would have done incredible harm or applied superficial balm. Our class on theory was to begin in April, Rod's was on since February. I integrated MEC, as best as I could, with other streams of thought – be it Jung,

Perls, Sartre, Rogers and Kegan. I crafted a *meaning-feeling framework*, very rudimentary, as a crucible for her to pour forth her reality. MEC faithfully guided all aspects, and still does. The first session was for 4 hours! And here, I share a few pages from my notebook, with my client's permission.

The rearview mirror makes me wish I had taken the theory before I started my work with my client, but MEC was my beacon long before I knew what I must be doing. Thus, systems thinking and my excursion into its labyrinth was so gratifying. Yet, that story is still unfolding – albeit, in a much more informed way.

THE METAPHORS



Ruth, I know that adeptness in theory is by no means a guarantee of adroitness as a coach - that is an enduring metamorphosis. As a learner, the metaphor that unerringly draws the relationship and meaning to all that I have poured is **Rhythm**. It has twin aspects - first, as a unit of measure and equivalent to the musical metronome, tells me the work is unified and intelligible. Second, the rhythmic interventions shape my work, riding through me, its chief instrument, as I apply what I learn, contemplate my sense of coherence - the very tenor of my being is emergent in its meaning. I sometimes am the *medium*, sometimes the *message*, and at times the *audience* too.

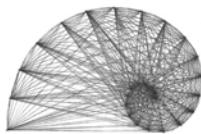
In close friendship with rhythm is **Space** that I have begun to sense. They are both interdependent, the one does not exist without the other. Space is not a thing to be grasped, neither is it a mystical entity. The rhythms play out the patterns in space. That is as much within as without. There is a blur that reminds me of the boundary but I travel across, inside and outside of me. For perspective, I oft head back to the central point from where I had begun to read the space (mine or that of my client) - there I can see the contours better, and then I zoom back out again to see the overlaps and back-steps, when one outline of a notion crosses another. At that cloverleaf, they contradict, juxtapose, coalesce and join in a fluid evenness.

There are many characteristic idiosyncrasies that I am letting go and they, of me; all of mutual accord. Quite akin to an iambic pentameter that lets go of the 6th syllable it no longer needs and it isn't that part of the poem anymore. It did what it had to, when it had to. Now, its purpose is over. It must rest, as must I. The bargain of my soul has expired its statute of limitations. They (the world I left) no longer own me, and I am not anyone's mortgaged mind. My existence and essence breathe in this space.

I am as free as I let myself be.

There is an unvarnished awareness of my limitations - in a clearer, kinder, keener way - as are my strengths. I am becoming a person of an altered kind. The weltanschauung (world view) seems to mutate and organize itself, with indeed no conscious help from me. I often find myself peering, poetically askance, for I cannot yet name this amorphous state of my being. I am learning to flow with the '-ness' of it. That unnamed state has a redolent grandeur that I feel inside. The metaphors will change as I will transform; yet in the now they become my leitmotifs and give me a deep sense of *evolutionary truce*.

I thank you for your acceptance of me. Imperfect. Impermanent. A golden ratio. You helped me find a voice I had never known. It's not happenstance, your presence in my universe. I am grateful. At peace.



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- *Mind maps - It shows only what and how I learnt as I explored through this semester, and just for a few selected parts of my master mind map. You can only watch it on your laptop for you would have to magnify it at some places.*
- *Client – 3 pages of hand drawn process of what transpired in the first coaching session.*
- *Figures and Diagrams*

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