My (prospective) view of the world
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The basic motto is an anti-reductionist Buddha's statement

> *"In the sky there is no distinction of East and West; people create distinctions out of their own minds and then believe them to be true".*

My (prospective) view of the world *("awareness-based, action-oriented meta-thinking")*

- Spins around three mutually reinforcing concepts

    A. *Operating theories* (as opposed to "descriptive" ones)
    B. *Synthetic thought* (vs. "linear", "systemic", "complex" and "simple" ones)
    C. *Strong-and-ephemeral structure* (as a learning blueprint and path).

- Makes some "bifurcations" (i.e. emerging problems / paradoxes) explicit, with the will, but without the presumption, to solve them (actually, it searches for help...).

A. Operating theories

I have no formal definition of an "operating" theory; it's simply the (active) opposite of a "descriptive" one. Once grasped the underlying idea, it's very easy to discern between them

- *Descriptive theories*

    – Classify
    – Differentiate
    – Are amenable to hierarchical structuring
    – Grow exponentially in level of detail
    – ...

- *Operating theories,* on the other side, provide the solution of a problem

    – By relying on descriptive theories when the problem is simple (i.e., it's not a problem)
    – (Most of the times) by "applying paradoxes" when the problem is tough (i.e. the problem is a real one).

The main common characteristics of operating theories are indeed

- *Paradox* (e.g. "you cannot solve a tough problem without resorting to some counterintuitive **and** unpopular solution"; if the solution were intuitive **or** popular, the problem would not be tough, i.e. it would not be a problem)
- *Vicious cycle* (usually, problems are tough when their outputs reinforce their inputs, or when the problems are more than one and interact to one another)
- *Self catalysis / bootstrapping* (the vicious cycle can be reversed): while the descriptive theory signals the existence of a vicious cycle, the operating theory indicates how to unwind it (i.e. where to start from).

Example: if your backbone is aching, some *muscle* is compressing some *bone* in an awkward position, which compresses some *nerve,* which aches, which causes the muscle to compress the bone, and so on *(description).* The possible *operating* theories are two

- *Somebody else* warms your *muscles* through massage and then sets your *bones* back into the correct position (external action)
- *You yourself* pretend in your mind non to be suffering, release the command that your *nerves* send to your muscles and wait - with patience! - for the vicious cycle to unwind (internal action).

You'll see it in a minute how *operating theories* "positively clash" with *synthetic thought* and *strong-and-ephemeral structure* ...in the spirit of *"there is no distinction...".*

B. Synthetic thought

1. *Linear* thought thinks cause-and-effect

2. *Systemic* thought thinks feedback, stability and control

3. *Complex* thought thinks self-organization and "emergences"; my opinion is that

    – The theory of complexity is one of the greatest achievement of the last century (it explains, unfortunately in a mostly "descriptive" attitude, a very large part of reality in a novel way)
    – In my wording, complexity theory says: "A *large enough* number of entities, which *freely interact* with reciprocal forces which are not too large or too small, *spontaneously* evolves towards a "**vital**" state, *intermediate* between order and chaos, which maximizes adaptability and learning, and experiences *self-organization* and *"emergences"*, as well as sequences of *"morphogenetic catastrophes",* the dimensions of which follow a statistical law (the smaller ones the more frequent, the larger the more rare)".
    If this is true, then we may infer that: *"life* is the natural / key emergence of *matter"; "learning* is the natural / key emergence of *life"; "consciousness* is the natural / key emergence of *learning".*

    When we go from individuals to society, we find one of the major social, economical and political bifurcations: some people already (meta-)think "together-as-a-whole"; some others did not completed the transition yet and still think "me-against-you".

    Another bifurcation is related to the possibility, from (individual and social) consciousness, of a "consciousness => learning => consciousness => learning" virtuous cycle, which may *not necessarily (descriptively)* – and in my view **not** *(operatively)* – be oriented in the direction of increasing complexity.

4. *Synthetic* thought

    – Recognizes complexity and - as a consequence - necessarily limited / constrained views of the world in individuals, societies and cultures
    – Aims at "team-based" learning (in the form of "workshops for group creativity and motivation"), where each member identifies his own wrong assumptions with the help of others, thereby improving collective thinking.
    This happens **rather** *by subtraction / simplification / targeting* **than** *by addition / complexification / "comprehensive description"* (this links back into the idea of "operating theory" and also into Buddha's idea that explanation / philosophy was not his target, but only - not by chance - the practical, operating way to avoid suffering).

5. *Simple* thought belongs to mystics, saints and enlightened people (they are already "beyond" operating theories, since they readily avoid useless action, ...let alone useless discussion).

For a western and rational person as I am, *synthetic thought* seems the most promising on a practical ground, for many reasons

- Complex and simple thoughts are not for everybody (it would be hard to diffuse them thoroughly), while synthetic thought - at least in theory - is for everybody (it could even be taught in primary school!)

- Synthetic thought is self-catalytic / bootstrapping, with a great social and cultural value (and therefore *should* be taught in primary school!)

    – Once you really start listening to the ideas of others, you put yours into discussion (and vice versa: virtuous cycle)
    – *In this way a great step ahead has* **already** *been made, as regards mutual understanding, civil living together, democracy, environmental respect, ...*

- *Synthetic thought (together with an approach based on operating theories) is the starting point of a simplifying "arc of thought" (which ends with "simple" thought), after the preceding (and unavoidable) complexifying arc of thought formed by "linear", "systemic" and "complex" thoughts*

- Synthetic thought is continuing and emerging "meta-thinking"

  – It continues to think "beyond the appearance", differently from what linear, systemic and complex thoughts do
  – *It (consciously) starts to sort out / repair the complexity problem* (i.e. ...the history between the Babel tower and the Twin towers).

- Synthetic thought is "heavily / second order" self-catalytic / bootstrapping

  – *Once people start thinking "synthesis", social as well as individual life, learning and awareness will experiment a meta-transition* (for a thorough discussion about "meta-transitions", cfr. the huge website of Principia Cybernetica Web, http://pespmc1.vub.ac.be)
  – We will experience an improved social and individual life, wider and deeper learning and awareness, and we will find - hopefully - the true meanings of (conscious and social) life, which - by auto-catalysis / bootstrapping - are (indeed / again) learning, awareness and living together.
    I understand that here I'm inserting more (possibly unnecessary) value / ethics in the traditional concept (overly simple and possibly "empty") of "fitness-centered" evolution; the difference with this approach may be due to my belief in "social awareness" as a key / due emergence (or, stated otherwise, as one of the main bifurcations / incomplete meta-transitions that humans are facing since long).

C. Strong-and-ephemeral structure

This is rather a tool than something else / more (but it "catalyzes" well with the rest). It consists in believing that

- Understanding and knowledge are not in the parts, but in their connections (a "relation-entity" model, as opposed to a more traditional "entity-relation" model), and that connections provide meaning to the parts

- Understanding and knowledge don't come from aggregating parts into a (description-oriented) "strong" structure – step which must anyway / inevitably be performed – but from the (operation-oriented) evolution of the "ephemeral" aggregating structure, once you have purposely searched for, and identified, its limitations (i.e. your wrong initial assumptions), by continued aggregation, comparison and discussion.

- "Operation" consists of

  – In "synthetic" thought, changing one's knowledge (mainly by changing its structuring texture!)
  – In "simple" thought, keeping oneself constantly "ephemeral" (i.e. open) vs. new / others' knowledge.

My first enlightenment is: *"meta is one"*

- Once you start thinking "meta", you never stop (it's like learning to ride a bike...)
- The meta-transition / emergence (in thinking) is all you need to create new, *real* knowledge.

My second enlightenment is: *"there is no end..."*

- There is no end *in the search for understanding* ...both if you look for action and for description (however, in the former case, you find much more ...and reach into a deeper description *as well as* a much simpler solution)
- There is no end in a double sense: 1) *no finish; no target* (the course "is the target", ...the way and the everything); 2) the journey *never ends:* it *starts* by leaving Eden, the *original* garden, which Adam and Eve left to become truly "humans", and *goes on* by *continuously* leaving the *present* garden (today's thinking).

Bifurcation / paradox 1 (description vs. operation)

We end up ANYWAY in DESCRIBING, when we try to communicate.
However, we cannot become friends only by drawing mammoths on the walls of a cavern; we need to hunt them together FIRST, and only drawing them LATER.

Side thought: maybe, *description more separates people than it unites them...* (we may argue a month about the different possible ways to peel an orange).

But if I offered you an orange while skiing together, nobody would care about the way to peel it (nonetheless, we could not live just by doing; sometimes, we need to "think", discuss - or, at least, teach children - the way to peel an orange without cutting one's fingers...).

The problem / paradox is there, waiting to be simplified...

Bifurcation / **paradox 2** (the violence paradox)

If I slap you into your face, you have 2 + 1 alternatives

- You do nothing (my violence wins)
- You slap me back (our violence wins)
- You find a "Gandhi-like" solution (the only way to fight violence out: ...not fighting).

Only in the third case - which reality testifies as RARE - violence does not win.
The third case belongs, in my view, to the realm of operating thought.

Let's *think! ...*about the Twin towers.
If Bush starts war, the possible outcomes are two

- If Bin Laden owns an atomic bomb (placed in a Washington D.C. apartment), Bush and America lose
- If Bin Laden does not own an atomic bomb, Bush might "win" (as regards America, it's not so clear).

In *either* case, *the strongest* wins.

Maybe in sports, *as well as in primary school,* we should **NOT** teach people the strongest should win!
This is most likely our biggest mistake ever.
Maybe we should find the way so that the *weakest* wins...

Further, once we have made this (thinking) transition, maybe we should go through the next one and start considering *winning (and losing) as "wrong" categories:* ***"nobody should ever lose".***

The problem / paradox has been simplified again and again ...on paper.
It waits to be simplified (operationally) in the minds of people...

Bifurcation / **paradox 3** (the time paradox)

Provided you agree about the violence paradox, what can we do?
Start teaching *complex, synthetic* and *Gandhi-like* thought in primary school?
How long would it take to change the world into a better place?

The time paradox (Murphy-like) states that

- The longest-range activity in your agenda *is the most important;* therefore, you should start immediately
- The longest-range activity in your agenda *will anyway be completed too late.*

That's why we badly need operating theories ...to get out of these problems / paradoxes which impair our chances to proceed in the "right" direction (...if any).

Bifurcation / **paradox 4** (is knowledge the way?)

If a nuclear war and/or global warming destroy our life on the planet, we would learn, anyway, "a piece of truth", i.e. the evil and stupidity within the man...

If, else, we would pursue the dream of civil living together, with a collective learning goal, how many operating paradoxes should we solve? and how little a descriptive philosophy would help?

Bifurcation / **paradox 5** (necessary vs. sufficient conditions), hopefully resolved

The future becomes progressively less predictable. Sufficient conditions for successful interventions are progressively harder to find out. Possibly, however, *necessary* conditions may be identified more easily.
In a complex world, the logic of intervention might have to change

> "Better comply with the necessary conditions, hoping the
> desired results might develop, than apply <u>alleged</u> sufficient
> conditions, presuming the expected results would ensue".

Needless to say, theories aim at finding out

- Descriptive ones, the laws of nature ...and sufficient condition for positive action thereafter
- Operating ones, working hypotheses of necessary conditions for success.

Of course, the ultimate consequences of a line of thought just match its introductory statements...

Bifurcation / **paradox 6** (dogma(s) vs. explorations, "revelation" vs. questioning / listening), unfortunately unsolved, possibly the mother of all (social) problems

A key social issue comes from the fact that *some people* (who will be <u>conventionally</u> called *"right-wing",* since not all right-wing people behave the same) and *some other people* (who will be <u>conventionally</u> called *"left-wing",* since not all left-wing people behave the same) start from two different assumptions, not so easily reconciled.

Exaggerating a bit, for the sake of argument, in *culture* it happens that

- The s.c. "right-wing" people / the rules / many religions / the dogmatic people in general / many "academics" / those who teach without understanding they must learn at the same time, all these people base their thinking on a series of "closed" schemes which they profess / put forward / support, without any significant listening to the other / the different / the clashing / the alternative side. They believe in the value of knowledge, in rules, in moral dictation and tend to expect all (the others) to conform, ...whether they are in agreement or not. Overall, they tend not to listen to the others and to their (different) positions

- The s.c. "left-wing" people / the icon breakers / the creative people / the anarchists / the inventors (the true ones) / the "explorers" in general / those who learn when they teach, believing that only learning is possible (and teaching is just a by-product), all these people act on the contrary in an open way, or adopt "open" schemes which they use to grow and provide openly for shared utilization and possible common growth. The do not deny the value of knowledge, and of rules too, but consider them in continuous change and – not trivially – consider the change (knowledge growth and rule evolution) more important than the situation at hand (what is done today and how it's done). Basically, they tend to listen to others (provided they listen back). They lose their temper when they don't see the same open attitude they have (or think to have) in the people in front of them.

Exaggerating again, in *economy* it happens that

- The s.c. "right-wing" people think that the pie will eventually get bigger, if everybody tries to carve out a larger slice of the pie for himself

- The s.c. "left-wing" people think that the pie should be made bigger first, in order to enable larger slices to be carved out for everybody.

The sad side of the story – in economy – is that neither solution works...
Maybe the same happens for culture (e.g., think about the old discussion between rigid and loose education of children...).

The situation which I briefly depicted does not favor any dialogue at all

- The s.c. "right-wing" people tend to basically impose their point of view, based on "unchangeable" certainties

- The s.c. "left-wing" people, who would love to find a "superior synthesis" of different stances (their willing, however does, not imply they will succeed...), given the behavior of the s.c. "right-wing" people (and, possibly, the inability of the "left-wing" people to synthesize solutions decently good for everybody...), end-up in stiffening and thus all the (possible? impossible?) dialogue goes down the drain.

The *main questions* are

1. Is there any chance of solution? or does the above description of the situation (given all the necessary clarifications and distinctions) show anyway a "dead-end street"?

2. If the end of the street is closed, is it so just as a matter of fact or ...inevitably (ontologically, I would say)?

Further questions are

3. Are values given (and by whom?) or are a matter of shared search ? are rules fixed or changing?

4. Is there any real merit in searching for a useful synthesis of different cultures?

Well, simply banning people who are "deaf vs. others" (like what was done with smokers) unfortunately is not a solution, but again a paradox...