

Capability Emergence Pt.1

Imagine for a moment that you can walk through time, or stand still and have time walk around you. Snap on your invisibility cloak and trip back to a when we started to stand still and plant seeds, and watch whole affair roll at x50 speed. You will see some very interesting things whiz by, as well linger around like visitors exhausting their stay. Who would have known that the marvels of sedentary life would have such downfalls, yet at the same time so much to teach us about ourselves. Perhaps you would see things that would put to rest many of the theory wars as to the origins of the "still life" and perceptions of the promised "good life." Regardless of intention or accident [Haviland], we would witness the rather quick transition from artifacts to empires. Within this wrapping we would see newfound control over food sources [Haviland], resulting in abundance of food, population explosions [Haviland] and new forms of culture and ritual that would other wise be difficult to execute in an age of nomadcity.

Imagine the splintering effect that this new context has on "what can be done." Soon however we would see, as if we were watching a Saturday afternoon episode of transformers, the division of labor required to run such a culture, morph in to class systems, and then wars with neighboring settlements [Haviland]. The population explosions, monoculture farming and abundance of food we would soon find out are optimal recipes for grand famines and disease like no other we have ever seen [Elhrich]. Hunter-gathers didn't have famines, they had "that guy just died" instead.

What is interesting is what we would see thereafter. Besides the few and wide bandage solutions, like perfume and lime we would notice new anomalies in our behavior. The phenomenal Voltron effect of famine, disease and abundance of waste that emerges in the conditions mentioned above would produce a lovechild, sanitation [Cipolla]. The literal mangled mess produced in conflict, and the alien like puss boils of disease posed themselves as new riddles to humanity. So as to taunt us with our own appendages, inscribing itself on our corpus. Few men, like the Rockefellers of their time, pursued these riddles with promising answers and directions, only leading to more questions, like a Library of Babel [Borges] with each room leading to an infinite amount of others. The only noble thing to do was to practice what we thought we knew and write it down for future book writers and body menders to engage with.

What I am getting at here is the emergence of what we know today as the medical field. There were in fact other shamanic forms earlier on but it was in these ripe conditions within the origins of civilization that it began to flourish and develop as an authentic recognized practice and profession with all the trimmings [NLM: Schullian et al]. As we watch in fast forward we soon see many unfamiliar and familiar things, appear and disappear. Medical texts in ancient languages pile high, such as the Huangdi Neijing in China dating back to as early as 1st Century BCE [Wikipedia Contributors]. The Sushruta Samhita, written by Sashruta outlined 120 surgical tools, many of which his own inventions [Raju] wisk by melting into new forms. We would witness that The Canon of medicine would do for pharmacology what the Sushruta Samhita did for surgery. Hippocrates fades in, setting forth his Hippocratic oath in 420 BC, setting the standards of medical ethics that will stand longer than he and still to this day [North]. Countless other medical all-stars globally ping-pong through the times of texts and bodies, negotiating and sharing as they work to define and mature a new and ever relevant capability.

Captivated, we watch the doctor quickly become clothed in various orbiting tools, uniforms, and specialized environments with increased complexity and difference. As this capability emerges these professional peripherals would work to further authenticate and propel it forward, as well as being a form of knowledge management. The results fuel its lifespan, and material real estate illustrates its value. By no means (at this time) do I intend to frame the medical field as a passing fad, nor am I questioning the importance of its existence. But the contrary, what can its inception and long-lived existence teach us about what to ask of the "symptoms" present in our current conditions in relation to the potential emergence of knowledge and capability.

Each epoch inherits the unresolved dilemmas of the past as well as authors the riddles of the next. If we were to step into the now and view Google as a “perceptual medium of attention,” then we can proceed to take a dip in the hyperworld luminous bath of the present [Cerveny]. What we have is a wealth of zebra-skin-Nike’s, Poke’mon fantasylands, and Indo-Chinese sushi-pizzas that punctuate the alchemy of seemingly porous cultures in a global multimarketplace. Diaspora, exemplified by the driving out of Jewish peoples by the Babylonians¹, has now a new light and expanded definitions in a globally connected context. In effect I believe it to be the wound of globalization, which applies to any displaced and marginalized people in the crosswire of acculturation between competing cultural bodies.

Diaspora isn’t anything new, for it has been explored previously in anthropology and various cultural studies. What is new is scale and pervasiveness, and the permutations of alternate flavors with diasporic resemblance. It has become such an issue that an experimental class at the University of Toronto called “Diaspora and Trans-Cultural Studies” has emerged [Czarnecki]. The textbooks are various novels, for a textbook does not yet exist. Neither does a clear capability to deal with these issues effectively. This class may disappear next year as many experimental classes do. Or perhaps it will multiply into several classes, edging with first steps towards its own discipline. It will truly become a discipline when the tools of ethnography and anthropology are required but not sufficient for it’s endeavors. What will be the tools of this trade? What is being explored here? If medicine was to cultivate knowledge about ourselves and our physical bodies, then this class could be initiating a body of knowledge pertaining to a greater understanding our cultural selves. What could emerge is a perspective of cultural intelligence that may evolve questions leading to possibly deeper considerations and perhaps “treatment” of such situations, or prevention of them all together. How will we re-symbolize the role of culture in a planetary civilization? Classes are often nixed reflecting a lack of enrollment; these classes are poor returns on investment. The economic and competitive framework that has made contributions to revealing this infliction could be the very source that extinguishes its potential cure. Some may say the intricacies of co-cultural existence are too complex and historically too difficult to approach, yet address. But so too was the understanding of our circulatory system, or polio.

¹Diaspora - n

1. the scattering of the Jews to countries outside of Palestine after the Babylonian captivity.
2. (often lowercase) the body of Jews living in countries outside Palestine or modern Israel.
3. such countries collectively: the return of the Jews from the Diaspora.
4. (lowercase) any group migration or flight from a country or region; dispersion.
5. (lowercase) any group that has been dispersed outside its traditional homeland.
6. (lowercase) any religious group living as a minority among people of the prevailing religion.

[Source: Dictionary.com]

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