

6. Agents of Transformation

The Organization of Society

So, what's the organization? Well, here's how society is organized. In ancient Mesopotamia, the highest god, Marduk, had 50 names. Why? He was likely an amalgamation of all the tribal gods that aggregated when this civilization began to emerge. Each tribe had its own deity, and they came together after battles, debates, and conceptual amalgamations. The positive aspects of different gods merged, and a new abstraction emerged. Eventually, a god like Marduk rose to dominance.

Marduk had eyes all around his head. Like Horus, the Egyptian god, Marduk could see everywhere. He spoke the magic words that transformed day into night, indicating a doctrine of the word—the creative word. The Mesopotamians realized that this god ruled all others, which was a major step toward a sophisticated monotheism. So, what should rule over everything else?

Attention and the Redeeming Word

In the *Lord of the Rings*, it's the ring of power that symbolizes the corrupt side. On the good side, the Mesopotamians believed that the power lay in multifaceted attention and the ability to speak transformative words. For the Egyptians, Horus symbolized the ability to see corruption in the king and pay attention to what is wrong. The Egyptians understood that the state can corrupt. When the king becomes anachronistic and willfully blind, Horus redeems through paying attention.

Societies come together by hammering on a structure of value until all pieces are aligned, from the very bottom to the top. The people within this unified structure are also unified in their psyche. Mental health, in this context, is the alignment of societal and personal values. There is no sanity in an insane society.

Buddha's Transformation and Self-Sacrifice

The Buddha's enlightenment came after trials, sacrifices, and intense discipline. He even starved himself to the point where a grain of rice would stick out from his neck. After rejecting nirvana due to the unpreparedness of others, he returned to the world to share the news of enlightenment because redemption of the whole is necessary for individual redemption.

Christ embodies this universal savior archetype, as his self-sacrifice is the redeeming principle for both the psyche and society. If the goal is self-sacrifice for a higher good, society benefits. If the goal is power—"Do what I say, or else"—you can maintain it for a while, but not for long.

Serving the Spirit of the Family and Community

In marriage, you serve the spirit of the marriage. As a parent, you serve your children, now and in the future. The family serves the community, the community serves the state, and so on up the hierarchy. A life of service provides meaning, as it challenges and develops you.

Personality and Social Anxiety

Psychologists have used statistical analysis of word groupings to categorize personality dimensions. For example:

- **Positive emotion:** extroversion, assertiveness, happiness, outgoingness.
- **Negative emotion:** anger, sadness, pain, anxiety (neuroticism).
- **Agreeableness:** empathy, warmth, compassion vs. competitiveness, judgment.
- **Conscientiousness:** orderliness, industriousness, reliability.
- **Openness:** creativity and openness in art and ideas.

Self-consciousness is strongly associated with neuroticism, and it can hinder social interactions. When you're socially anxious, you should aim to make others feel at ease. This is a key component of social skill. If you focus on the other person, you

can build trust, leading to better relationships.

The Influence of Others and Social Patterns

People shape your behavior constantly. When you disappoint someone you love, they have an ideal pattern you're supposed to mimic, and the disappointment signals that you deviated from that pattern. The pattern you embody is shaped by society, and it's crucial to understand that.

Children learn by imitating the people around them. For example, when a child plays "house," they aren't just imitating their father directly—they abstract the spirit of the father from many instances and then act it out. This is a fundamental form of play that later turns into learned procedures.

Procedural Learning and Society

As society integrates, the disjunctions between aims are eradicated, leading to a unified system. As you mature, your perspective broadens. What once seemed clear becomes more complex. This is part of personal development—seeing the big picture and understanding the hierarchies within society.

The Role of Memory

Humans have three types of memory:

1. **Skill memory** (procedural): It's how you learn tasks like riding a bike or skiing. Even without remembering the details, you can perform the skill.
2. **Declarative memory**: The ability to recall facts and events.
3. **Semantic memory**: Facts or knowledge about the world.

Procedural memory is fundamental. When you practice a skill, it becomes embedded in your neural pathways. But if you want to break an old habit, you need to replace it with a new skill. This requires effort and time.

The Power of Listening and Salesmanship

To succeed in life, whether in sales or any other field, you must listen. Sales isn't about manipulating others; it's about understanding their needs and offering a solution. Trust is the foundation of every relationship, and listening helps build that trust.

Why Listening is Crucial:

- It helps you understand people's needs.
- It builds relationships based on trust.
- It ensures that you're offering the right solution.

If you don't listen, you're selling based on a falsehood. To be successful, your offer should be a genuine match to the person's needs, not just a transaction. In doing so, you create a long-term, trusting relationship.

Societal and Personal Patterns

Humans act out their roles in the broader social structure. Just as the wolf pack knows its status hierarchy, humans are deeply attuned to status. Our status and reputation are important, and we constantly shape ourselves to align with the expectations of others.

Our social interactions reflect the values and status hierarchies of the society we live in. We embody patterns of behavior that we pick up from others, whether consciously or unconsciously. Understanding these patterns can help us navigate and transform our lives.

Procedural Knowledge, Dreams, and Transformation

Knowledge progresses through a series of stages:

1. **Procedural knowledge:** Learning by doing, not just understanding.
2. **Dreams and fantasy:** The right hemisphere of the brain, responsible for novelty

and anomaly detection, uses dreams to explore unknown territories.

3. **Interpretation:** Once the knowledge is acted upon and experienced, we can interpret the images in our dreams, eventually making them explicit.

Dreams serve as a bridge between the procedural and the explicit. They guide us by showing us what we don't know, and by embodying strategies for life transformation.

Hierarchical Systems of Knowledge

From procedural knowledge to explicit knowledge, we move through layers:

- Play becomes ritual.
- Ritual transforms into drama.
- Drama becomes myth.
- Myth gives birth to religion.
- Religion transitions into literature.
- Literature evolves into philosophy.

This hierarchy mirrors the development of knowledge in individuals and societies. Through imitating others, we learn, embody, and ultimately transform.

The Meta Story: Death and Rebirth

The meta story of transformation is a journey of death and rebirth. When things fall apart, we reconstitute a new game, a better game. This is the fundamental pattern of literature, myth, and human existence. It's a process of continual improvement, where challenges are met and conquered, leading to personal and collective growth.

Transforming Chaos into Order

The key to mastering chaos is mastering transformation. An ordinary person can master their current domain, but the true mastery comes from the ability to navigate and transform the world around you. As the seeker in *Harry Potter* seeks the golden ball (a fragment of the soul), we seek transformation in our lives, using courage and creativity to navigate the chaos.

Societal Transformation:

- We can always change the game.
- Human beings are unique in our ability to transform and change our perception of reality.
- Challenges and limitations are opportunities for transformation.

Conclusion: The Meta Story of Human Transformation

The meta story of transformation is about the collapse of old structures and the creation of new ones. It is a story of moving from ignorance to wisdom, from chaos to order, from death to rebirth. As humans, we are equipped to master this process, transforming ourselves and the world around us.