Reflexivity Reading – 2

''Objectivity', 'Our Somewhere', 'Our Bucket' & 'Our Spectacles'

Reflexivity is seen as the foundation of practical wisdom as it is vital we are mindful of our habits of attention and interpretation when making judgements. One's house of habits is furnished with windows of prejudgements/**prejudices** that one has acquired throughout one's lived experience of the world – these prejudgements/**prejudices direct our attention and colour our interpretations – they determine what we take account of in our judgements**. These prejudices/pre-judgements are pre-cognitive – they are before thought – they are buried deep in our mindscape. We are normally and usefully mindless of most of them in our everyday lives – but if we wish to be powerful in our judgments, we must strive to shake off these prejudicial shackles so that we have the possibility of engaging in the circumstances we face with an attempted 'naked receptivity', and attempt a perspective freed of pre-conceptions.

Frederick Nagel powerfully crystallises the need for reflexivity in his comment that ***"there is no such thing as a view from nowhere"***. Maybe better put as – ***the view is always from somewhere*** – *one always has a perspective*. To be reflexive, is to be mindful of one's somewhere – of one's 'house' of habits & language – it is to own and take responsibility for one's viewpoint, and understand that there are other somewheres from which the view may look very different to the one we have from our own somewhere.

We must understand that to escape fully from one's house of acquired language & habits is impossible, that there can never be a view from nowhere, and that **objectivity can only ever be a pursuit** – that it is **a striving, not a state** that can be achieved. **To be reflexive is to struggle with our somewhere when we are 'taking a view' – to be mindful that the world is 'as we see it' not 'as it is'** - as Nietzsche says "there are no facts – there only are only ever interpretations"- the facts never speak for themselves!

This reflexive pursuit is tough – it requires serious focussed effort. Being reflexive is rather like standing in a bucket and trying to pull oneself up by its handle – it is not possible to achieve this feat, just like it is not possible to escape your somewhere/your house of habits, but it is the striving for this escape that counts – **reflexivity is a striving, not a state that can be achieved – if you are not feeling the struggle you are not being reflexive**.

You must rattle the locks, and bang on the windows of your house of habits & language. If you are to start on the path to wisdom you must recognise its windows as the apertures through which you access the world and come to see how they mediate your understanding of the world. The Mindful Manager is highly aware of what shows up to her/him as mattering, and how it shows up. **If we are to found our judgements well we must notice what we notice, and question what we perceive**

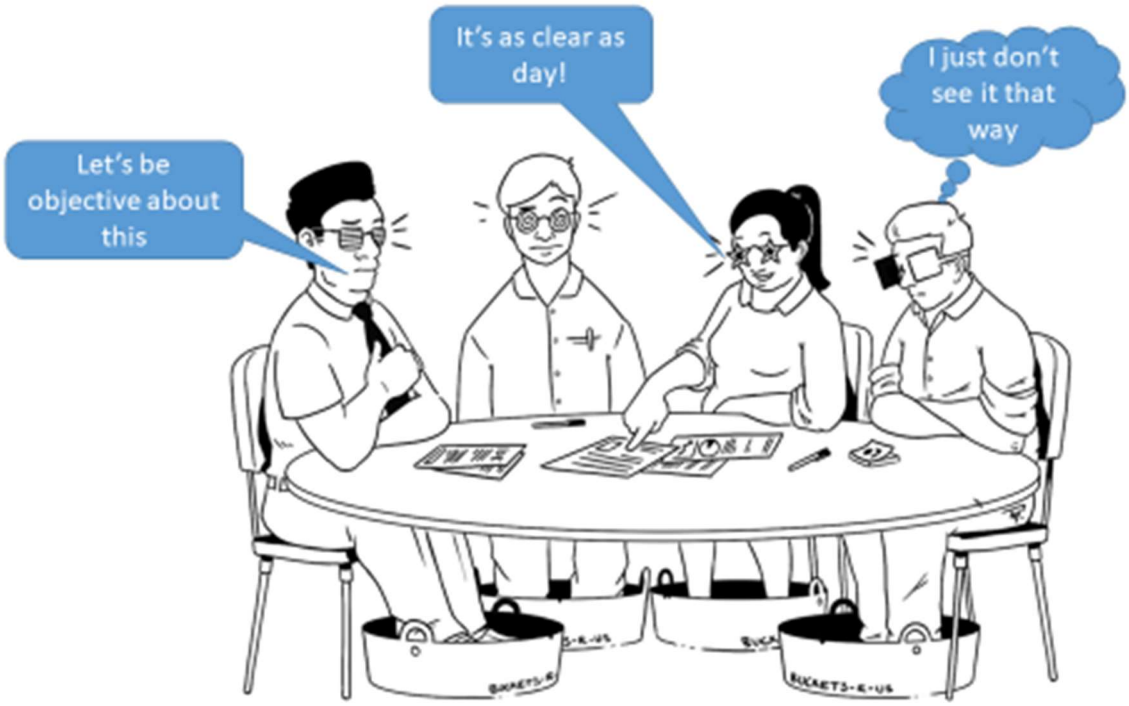
The windows of our house are the prejudicial spectacles through which we always view the world – but sadly we cannot take them off. We can only struggle with them and strive to understand and modulate their colour, brightness, shape and field of view.

In the managerial crafting of that **interconnected array of means and ends we term strategy** we dialogically meld multiple individual judgements as to what is 'right' into a shared perspective on what is 'for the best'. In this strategizing, we also determine, maybe more crucially as it is so foundational, **the nexus of assumptions on which we base these judgements**. Together we make judgements as to what we should take account of; of what is going on; and as to why what is going on, is going on - **we**

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socially construct 'our reality' – '**our beginnings'.** In our dialogues we pursue a shared view of what is 'real & right' by the melding of views taken 'from different 'somewheres' through their different 'windows-on-the-world'.

When in dialogue the practically wise person is mindful of the buckets of prejudices carried into the meeting room, and the attention-determining interpretation-constraining spectacles to which these prejudices give rise. We all come to the table unique in our history and hence with unique spectacles – others may have very similar lenses on the world but they are never the same. These judgement shaping metaphorical spectacles are not visible of course, and are not simply manifest in the conduct of ones interlocutors; nor are your own spectacles visible to others – the buckets of prejudices from which they originate are out of sight 'under the table'.



The Mindful Manager sees reflexivity as crucial for powerful dialogue, but also dialogue as a powerful provocation to her/his own reflexivity.

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