

Re-thinking strategic thinking

Knowing, Knowledge and Strategy

Introducing the autopoietic modality of “knowledge”: how drastically our ideas are transformed

In bit 4, we explored the impact of the cognitivist and the connectionistic modalities on our three concerns – dwelling, knowing and learning.

Bit 5 introduces the autopoietic modality and starts to show you how drastically our ideas of organisation and strategy process are changed by the autopoietic modality.

And part 6 will continue that.



00.38 Alright, autopoietic.

I asked a friend of mine, how can I express or say what autopoietic is, simply?

And he just texted me back, “the capability of self-procreation.”

I went, oh yeah, right, okay.

He's right, he's right, but in a business or in a management context, it's not very illustrative, is it?

Anyway, he went on to say, the classic example is an amoeba splitting to recreate itself.

Do you remember your biology classes?

I can still see this, blub, blub, blub, blub, blub, blub, blub, blub, blub, blub.

All okay, yeah, to amoeba, from my biology class.

Oh God, well we used to call it year 3, I don't know what grade it is now.

I would have been 13.

02.00 Maybe this way [as illustration]

Do you remember playtime at school when the bell went blub and you all ran out into the quad or the playground?

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How come, how come the quads, the playground had zones? And what I mean by that is year groups, or sometimes even gangs, but I went to a grammar school so we didn't have gangs.

But year groups dominated, they had particular parts of the quad, and you didn't go into those if you weren't in that year.

Once you arrived in that year group, hey, this is ours now!

How come that happens? How come that happens?

Every playtime, that pattern is the same.

You get football in the same space, it's the same places.

Probably do it in the UK, soccer.

The girls, they're skipping ropes in the same places.

And the rules, if you want to join in a game, you have to ask, whose game is it?

And when they tell you whose game it is, please can I play?

That also tells you the rules, because not every leader of the game had exactly the same rules.

How come?

A game was not led by the same person every playtime.

But every playtime, that game was played.

How come?

03.54 Let's be all grown up.

You go home from work. When you all go home, essentially the organisation stops working. Because you're not there doing anything, are you? I mean, one time I said to a class, the organisation didn't exist, but they wouldn't accept that, so it stops working.

And yet the next day, you all go back, and you're all doing the same thing again.

How come?

How does that keep happening?

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04.34 Well, what I want to say to you is, you may never, ever have recognised it, but there is an, or several, autopoietic processes at work.

Things that recreate that same pattern.

They're working.

04.55 So, the autopoietic modality regenerating natural or organisational structures. The thing that I'm interested in here is the autopoietic process of knowledge creation.

Can we get at the know-how of knowing more than we did before?

Ooh, I did that the wrong way round, I think, but never mind.

More than we did before.

I forget that the camera turns it round.

Anyway, ta-da!

05.50 What we're interested in is the process of transferring, or if you like, recreating, because it is a

recreation in mind of what's known between members of organisation.

Okay, okay.

Autopoietic modality

- **Autopoiesis:** the process of regenerating these natural and organisational structures.....
- Autopoiesis: my focus is on *the process* of knowledge creation – the know how of knowing more...
- The process of transferring and re-creating what is known between members of organisations

• OK, that's that stuff, what about transferring and re-creating knowledge in strategy?



06.11 So, we've done all this metaphoric nature stuff.

You've talked about knowledge.

What about the strategy bits?

06.33 What I was saying to you earlier on is that the rational and the cognitivist view, Michael Porter on strategy, why you do something, because of this economic, microeconomic dominant logic.

How do you do it?

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Well, look, I've been terribly clever says Michael Porter and I've invented the value chain and I've invented the five-forces model of infrastructure. And so you use these tools to work out what it is you have to do.

Oops.

The theory leads to the rest of it.

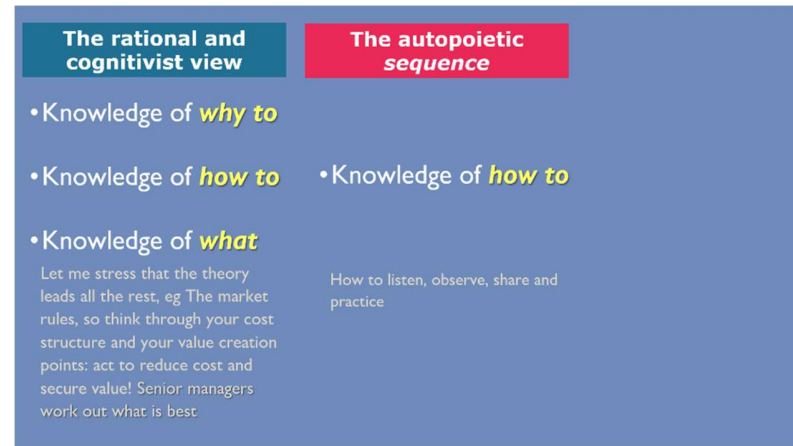
Market rules, think through your costs, reduce those, identify your value creation points, enhance those. And the senior managers are the ones that know best. Okay?

07.37 Let's contrast that with what I'm going to call the **autopoietic sequence**.

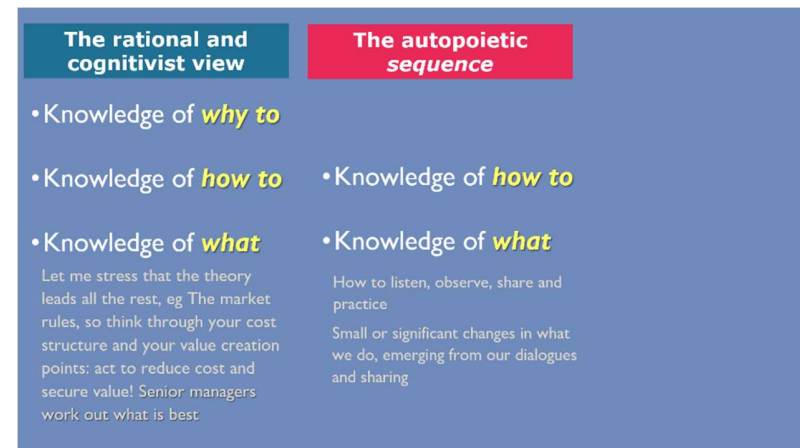
Now, why?

Well, autopoiesis is a process, so it has to have a sequence.

And it starts with the knowledge of how to do stuff, because you do know how to do stuff, don't you?



What's important in this model is how you listen, how you observe, and how you practice the ideas that you pick up or you think about, how you become more skillful.



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Practice, practice, practice, practice.

Big noise is not good.

The listening, the sharing, the imagining, doing, this community of conversation, for want of actual expression, gives insight into what it is that you do.

And as you experiment, you make small significant changes in what you guys collectively do, hings change.

09.12 Some of these things might be really significant, but the issue is this.

They have emerged out of your conversations and your dialogues, and you're trying out, testing out what each other say, not in the sense that they're wrong, but, oh, yeah, that works for me. I can do that too.

The rational and cognitivist view	The autopoietic sequence
• Knowledge of <i>why to</i>	• Knowledge of <i>why to</i>
• Knowledge of <i>how to</i>	• Knowledge of <i>how to</i>
• Knowledge of <i>what</i>	• Knowledge of <i>what</i>
Let me stress that the theory leads all the rest, eg The market rules, so think through your cost structure and your value creation points: act to reduce cost and secure value! Senior managers work out what is best	How to listen, observe, share and practice Small or significant changes in what we do, emerging from our dialogues and sharing New explanations of our relating to the environment – why we do stuff

09.39 “Oh, so what are we doing now then?”

“Well, look, what we're doing now is seeing the environment like this, and we're doing this, and this connects to it like that.

“We have a new explanation that explains back to ourselves and back to the organization why it is we're doing what we're doing because of what we've now discovered we can do, and because of the way it has an impact on the environment, what it enables us to achieve in the environment.”

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Oh, dear, bit five, bit five, bit five.

I was trying to give you examples of autopoietic processes working in organizations, to reflect back on your experiences, particularly the one at school, where things come about and you get to know things through autopoietic process, but you're not aware of that process going on.



Then we were exploring the distinction, I hope, between explicit ways of thinking and working and the cognitivist ideas and views of why we do something, the tools that you use to do that thing, and then what you have to *do into this different process of knowing how and knowing how to listen, knowing how to talk, knowing how to speak, knowing how to share, and through that knowing, enabling others to know and to have insights so that the organization can become more innovative and remembering that it is a process.*

A lot of this is tacit. You don't deliberately tell yourself how to do this.

I hate to use the word culture, but it is encultured as a way of thinking and working.

We'll have a look at some more. We'll go back to looking at the formal matrix now in part 6.

You take care. We'll see you next time.



The playlist

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLOlzrdw8c9lxsImsgFsy77CO32-kTfqj4>

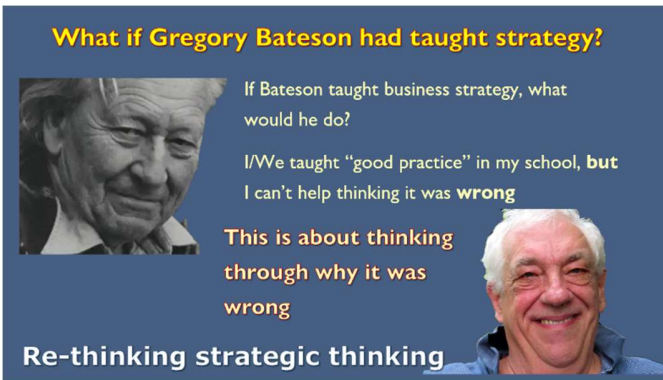
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