

Follow your heart, it's always right... part 2

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[Volg je hart, dat klopt altijd \(deel 2\) - The Optimist](#) It has been translated by the author, Madeleen Mulder, a creative (legal) systems innovator & owner of www.coddiwomple.services who uses transparency & energy to create movement and trust in people & organizations

Our senses are our antennae to the outside world, and make it possible to experience the outside world. They help us adapt to changes in the world around us, to update our inner stories when our changing environment needs us to adjust. Is our ratio that has guided us since the Age of Enlightenment really as important as today's emphasis on science makes us believe? Or do our other ingenious human capacities perhaps deserve some more appreciation? Can we find a new balance between the objective and the subjective by being more in the present moment, and by truly experiencing the world around us? Do we dare to use our heart in addition to our head? To allow us to create new stories and new worlds together.

Maps

An essential characteristic of the neoliberal school of thinking is the unshakable position of science. Since the Age of Enlightenment, science has played the role that religion previously held in the western world. In science, rational thinking has always played a lead role. After all, what we can objectify and quantify gives us a sense of control. In a world until then 'ruled' by an elusive phenomenon like God, that control, that grip on reality, felt very comfortable. It gave us the illusion of human beings controlling the world, controlling life.

In recent decades we seem to have forgotten that science evolves around explaining phenomena that can be observed in the world around us at specific points in time. As a result, many different scientific disciplines nowadays still try to capture occurrences and phenomena taking place in a dynamic reality within static models. Models that are such gross simplifications of reality that most nuance and diversity is lost as a result. Or models that, by definition, dismiss specifically observed exceptions as statistically irrelevant. Let's compare a model with a road map. A road map is used to find the way to a certain goal based on a limited number of selected, specific pre-determined criteria. And any maps reflects only a part of reality at a certain moment in time. The larger part of reality is not visible on the road map. After all, would that be the case the map would become completely unreadable. Furthermore, the specific factors that are visible on the map depend on the purpose to be pursued with the use of the map (the model).

Humility

Do we really believe that simplified scientific models, each often in its own fragmented field or subfield, adequately reflect the complex and ever-changing reality of life? And do we find the pursuit noble and naïve, or simply arrogant? At the very least, it seems to bear little witness of a humble approach to think that everything can, or should be, explained by means of a model. Would a little more modesty towards our own role be appropriate on a planet that has existed for millions of years longer than humanity? A planet that will undoubtedly continue to do very well long after we are gone. Undeniably, the various sciences have brought us a wealth of knowledge, insights and progress. However, let's also keep in mind that science is ultimately a wonderful and perpetual search for new

explanations and insights. It's good to realize every now and then that maps and models are abstractions of reality, snapshots really, not absolute truths.

Balance sheet

In economics, too, the value that we attach to models and their supposed objectivity and comprehensiveness seems to be rather overestimated. How is it possible that an economic model, which is in essence about mapping human behavior, does this mapping without assigning any value to our human experiences? Experiences that we gain through the ingenuity, complexity and adaptivity of the human toolkit: our senses and our nervous system.

Do we simplify our models to such an extent because the growing complexity, chaos and interconnectedness of phenomena in the world around us is simply too overwhelming and incomprehensible to fit into any model? And do we perhaps primarily use these simplified models to satisfy our need for control? In 1968 Senator Robert Kennedy already observed the relative importance of gross domestic product as a means of measuring the true value of life. After all:

"Our gross domestic product ... counts air pollution and advertising for cigarettes and ambulances to clear our highways of carnage. It counts special locks for our doors and jails for the people who break them. It counts the destruction of our forests and the loss of our natural wonder in chaotic sprawl. It counts napalm and the cost of a nuclear warhead, and armoured cars for police who fight riots in our streets. It counts rifles and knives and the television programs, which glorify violence in order to sell toys to our children. Yet the Gross Domestic Product does not allow for the health of our children, the quality of their education, or the joy of their play. It is indifferent to the decency of our factories and the safety of our streets alike. It does not include the beauty of our poetry or the strength of our marriages, the intelligence of our public debate nor the integrity of our public officials. It measures neither wit nor courage; neither our wisdom nor our learning; neither our compassion nor our devotion to our country. It measures everything, in short, except that which makes life worthwhile."

In light of the inherent unicity of every human being and the enormous adaptability of our brain the use of such numerical models seems short-sighted at least. The perspective adhered to for so long seems too limited to do justice to the underlying complexity of life. After decades of ever-increasing consumerism, individualism and exploitation of the earth and its inhabitants, is it perhaps time to re-balance the use and value of our rational and irrational qualities? Shall we start paying attention to the whole again, rather than only to the individual parts?

The intention?

More than anything, the large-scale attempt to 'capture' human life and behaviour in a mainly numerical way seems to provide the illusion of control. Additionally, we can ask whether it is desirable from an ethical perspective. Why would we want to do this? What purpose does it serve? To be able to categorize people as a number and a dataset? Merely to increase efficiency? Efficiency of what? Does it make life for the average citizen better? In light of a growing number of scandals worldwide, ever increasing civil rights violations and growing social and financial inequality, these are urgent questions for us all. What do we want? How do we wish to live? After all, there are plenty of examples that our western almost prophetic worship of the cognitive, of the emphasis on science and 'evidence', is wearing off: large groups of people with burnout or depression who can no longer (or no longer want to) participate in the 'economic utility' of their bullshit job; the models that, when used in

practice, do not yield nearly the GDP outcome or CO2 or nitrogen reduction that was predicted and calculated; epidemics that do not behave according to models based on historical data and natural disasters that are occurring ever more frequently and unpredictably worldwide. Now that the old neoliberal narrative is crumbling down, and it becomes visible that the systems and practices based on this story seem to destroy a great deal more than they generate, questionmarks are placed with these models and figures. What value do we attribute to models and figures. Where do we consciously use them, and where not?

Meta-life

Given the fact that we use algorithm-based models and digital equivalents of our natural abilities, such as movement and eye tracking, to design our systems, one would think we have little confidence in our own senses and what we learn from our experiences. Apparently, we place greater confidence in technology than in ourselves. However, if you look at Facebook's investments for the coming 5 years, a different picture emerges. Facebook seems to be betting on both. It aims to collect a huge amount of data about our human behaviour. In order to develop the so-called Metaverse. A new virtual world(s) parallel to our 'real' world, developed based on tons of data about our behavior, our movements, our choices and interactions. A new world with unprecedented possibilities, so they state. A virtual world that may (partly) also help us to live more sustainably, and that offers ways of imagining how we can regenerate our 'real' world. These virtual worlds are quickly emerging, with or without Facebook. Worlds that we can design with images and stories that are so beautiful, lifelike and hopeful that they touch our hearts. So that our youth can be inspired by all kinds of perspectives from different places and times. It allows us to use both modern technology and ancient wisdom to turn the 'real' world back into a liveable, kind and just environment.

We are still pretty much at the beginning of this new story, of creating those new worlds. And so the question arises if we want to leave the writing of that new story, the creation of those new worlds, to a company that has grown at the expense of the mental health of our children and young people globally? An organization that time and time again consciously and on a large scale abuses our human emotions. By means of using algorithms that magnify our emotions and that suck each of us more and deeper into our own bubbles. An organization that would rather sow division among populations and groups worldwide than bring people together. Perhaps the arrogance of the name change from Facebook to Meta (claiming part of the generic name as a brand name) by this organization that operates for self-serving purposes at the expense of the health of its hundreds of millions of users, says enough about its intentions?

The opportunity of a lifetime

So... are we going to use the emergence of this new world in which the 'real' and virtual world come together, as a once in a life-time opportunity to write a new story together? For creating a whole new world? A new story that takes into account the complexity and diversity of people and our living environments. The complexity of life that can never be fully and sufficiently captured in simplified models, algorithms and predictions. Of course, algorithms may play a role and technological progress in itself is often valuable and promising. However, do we sufficiently question the simplification of the complexity of life that inherently takes place when using artificial intelligence? Simplification due to the excessive use of numerical models, without any further human interference or correction. Because no matter how promising technology and the possibilities it offers may be, aren't we still the ones designing these technologies? Do we realize that the technological systems and algorithms that record and process our human actions and behaviors, without any further knowledge of the cause or background of these actions and behaviors, are in fact black boxes? Black boxes that 'catch' and

process a limited amount of visible data, or parameters. Black boxes that are unable to capture and use the specific context and detailed background of the case, let alone the purpose of the person behaving in certain way. Do we really want our world to run on models, maps, that exclude everything that makes life worthwhile. Do we really want to exclude from our maps everything that touches our hearts, yet is immeasurable.

The spell is broken

If we have learned anything from the developments around the Internet and AI-driven systems in recent years, it is probably that they reflect the chaos in the 'real' world, the chaos within us. Our distrust, polarization, the mounting amount of fear, and on the other hand the growing transparency and autonomy. Bearing that in mind, perhaps from now we can start to pay closer attention, be more present. Consciously pause and reflect on your thoughts and emotions. Thoughts and emotions that encourage you to behave in a certain way, both online and offline. Hopefully after some practice you start to see how these repeated behaviors automatically yield certain patterns. Patterns as a result of which you end up in a specific bubble. Do you really want that? And if not, in between the experience and your response, can you consciously reflect on the emotions and thoughts that the experience evokes? And question yourself around the themes that emerge, and perhaps talk about it with others.

What do I want? And what do we want together? Where do we use algorithms and how do we design them? In which metaverse do I want to game, meet friends, conduct business meetings? And how do I want to treat my physical living environment, nature and the people around me? So that when you have the answers to these questions, it allows you to adjust your response, your behavior, and slowly break the spell of your bubble. Now that an ever larger group of people become aware of the individual choices and their impact, offline and online, the world around us will increasingly start to reflect that. After all, all of us together form our societal and organizational fabric. Together we make up our families and other systems that we are part of.

To be

When we ask ourselves the above questions, our insight will automatically grow that nature simply already shows us the way. After all, doesn't the performance of the world's best-conducted symphony orchestra reveal a sharp contrast to the intelligent patterns, the complexity and the many symbiotic collaborations in nature? Will we imagine a new future with life and nature as a starting point? And is this really that different from what we have done since time immemorial? After all, haven't the techniques and technologies developed mimicked nature already for years? An airplane looks suspiciously like a bird. And the internet is a beautifully human-designed equivalent of the intricate root system under the ground that trees use to communicate and cooperate. We know of algorithms that represent the characteristics of a swarm so that groups of people can work together effortlessly. Can we apply more and more biomimicry to restore the balance within and between people? Can we develop the courage to rely increasingly on our super antennas, our senses, to experience the world around us? After all, aren't our senses an important human tool designed to make sense of the world around us? Tools to help us develop our awareness of what is. In short, how do we increasingly use nature as a guidance to achieve a synthesis between nature and man-made technologies?

A global dialogue

In our nervous system the synapses form the connections, and enable the exchange of information, between neurons. Similarly, our human exchanges, our dialogues form the lines, the connections, between people. Can we jointly give meaning to the world around us, and to our collective stories through a worldwide growing number of dialogues? Dialogues that we urgently need to have in our 'real' and virtual worlds. Only when we delve into each other's stories again and again, exchange them from a place of respect and allow for both the similarities and the differences between those stories,

may we gradually create an ever-growing web of diverse stories together. Imaginal stories, beyond old ideologies and beliefs, because more and more people feel called to create these new stories. Together.

Follow your heart... use your head

Climate lawsuits, ecocide legislation, legal personhood for endangered nature reserves and rivers, and CEOs and pension funds that are slowly starting to realize that it is now five past twelve. Will all of this help to turn the tide in time? So that we collectively wake up and join the ever-growing movement of citizens that are consciously writing new stories and creating new realities. Stories that are being written line by line and page by page.

In the gap between impulse and response, can we discover more and more new stories together? Stories that make our hearts beat louder because they touch us deep inside. Do you remember how flawlessly that works? Because the heart simply knows. No proof or calculations required, right? Because our heart simply shows us the way. And with the help of the mind our heart's desires can be translated into actionable plans. Can we reintegrate the use of our hearts, love really, into our collective western societal narratives? So that we can co-create pluralistic and yet universal stories. Stories about a sustainable, just and loving world. Stories that can grow into a beautiful new reality through radical collaboration and respect for all life. Can we come to a synthesis of heart and head, a synthesis of being and doing?