

CREATING REPRESENTATIONAL SPACE:

DEMO OR DIE

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***Abstract.** In our experience the concepts of space and place demonstrate a very complex interaction of language, history and context. This paper is about creating representational space, because among us there is an overwhelming experience of displacement and dislocation. Heidegger described this experience as unheimlich or unheimlichkeit—literally ‘unhousedness’ or ‘not-at-home-ness.’ The position of this paper is that representational space is created by presenting felt-experience for viewing. There are two aspects to this paper. The first, we use the ‘fish-bowl’ as a concept to describe our existence as continually mediated by images. The second aspect of this paper has been covered by Paul Carter (1987) in ‘The Road to Botany Bay’ in which he demonstrates how ‘empty’ uncolonized space becomes place through the process of textuality.*

Introduction

As students and faculty we write papers and books and publish them, but the byword in what we're trying to accomplish in the Department of Management, College of Business Administration, University of Rhode Island is not "publish or perish," it's "Demo or Die"--- we're representing the case for an idea with an unfaked performance of it working at least once. We write about what we do, but we don't write unless we've done it. The focus is imagineering (Morgan, 1993) rather than studies or projects, invention rather than surveys or critiques.

To *create* representational space is to create *events* meant to direct the development of something *conceived* into something (*re*)*presented* and *experienced*. For example, the relationships between Linda Randall, Kathy Mallon, Bill Matteson, Matt Roy, Matt Eriksen, Valentin Pashtenko, Jaya Peruvemba, Karen Allen and Sanjiv Dugal are representations of something conceived, acted upon, and experienced. Our purpose has been to create *experiential representations* of ourselves. Writing for, and presenting at this conference is another such "event," viz., "Creating Representational Space: Demo or Die." Indeed, we're in process of creating our representational spaces as participants in this presentation.

The first half of the paper is a learning process of conceptualizing experience. We begin with conceptualizing our foremost feeling of being both, "observers and observed." We come to understand the experience of simulation (Baudrillard, 1983) and finally of "the spectacle" (Debord, 1977).

The second part of the paper 'theatre of the fish-bowl' is a chronological sequence of propositions consisting of actions and attributions that are invoked by a text. The story (Benveniste, 1971) constitutes the raw material, the chronological series of events, manipulated into a plot. Existing in a spatiotemporal plane beyond the text, the story may be viewed as the particular series of events that occurred in real time preceding this narration. As the basis of plot, story may be completely rearranged and organized to accommodate plot and narrative meaning.

Creating Representational Space

To create "representational space" what we have in mind are the principles and characteristics (Hirsch, 1967) essential to the establishment and maintenance

of meaningful and significant relationships. We associate the pairing of meaning with significance in ways that are matched and complementary:

‘Meaning is that which is represented by a text; it is what the author meant by his use of a particular sign sequence; it is what the signs represent. Significance, on the other hand, names a relationship between that meaning and a person, or a conception, or a situation, or indeed anything imaginable.’ (Hirsch, 1967,8)

With respect to creating “space” there are several threads that can be highlighted at this point: First, a sense of meaning and purpose is clearly essential to one’s individual experience of a space. Second, reason and action are of equal importance in the search for such meaning and purpose. Third, engagement is crucial and basic to achieving a sense of meaning and purpose.

Weaving “meaningful and significant” relationships into a design, i.e., creating space in the abstract, we begin by posing an obvious question: what is the ideal that represents our space in a meaningful and significant way? What is the concept that best represents our space? Not “topic-focus between us,” but the ideal. Some examples of felt-experiences between us: “Lighting Fires” in Utah; “Creating Impossible Worlds” in Brussels; and “Viking-Sikh” in Rhode Island.

Image-Event-Experience

An interesting challenge has been to formulate the relationship between something that is imaged (Lacan, 1977a, 1977b) or conceived in the abstract, and something that is felt and experienced for real. How do we do this when the subject matter is institutional change, or community building, or knowledge representation? That is to say, how do we imagine something and experience it at the same time?

To *experience a space* (implied or articulated), we propose (re)presenting its interactive process. We believe that whenever we’re able to (re)present ourselves, a *feeling* (of representational space) will be experienced. Indeed, the *form* of interaction is discerned whenever its *felt-experience* is revealed. By setting ourselves the task of creating a space through interaction and engagement, and by (re)presenting this process, we experienced a presence/absence (Derrida, 1973, 1976, 1981) of representational space.

We distinguish between what is “imagination” and that which is “real,” that is to say, we distinguish between thought leading to an outcome or event, and

then its experience. Imagination manifests in ‘happenings’ that we experience. Some examples would be presenting research, attaining accreditation, graduation ceremonies, etc. Furthermore, we distinguish events as being “real” (Lacan, 1977) which is obviously an end more instrumental than imaginative .

After making these distinctions, we ask a basic question: how can *thought* and *outcome* be seen as aspects of one process? For, the way these two types (thought and outcome) cooperate in a single task is far from clear. Our concern is to see how two graphic types (technical and imaginative) might be related to one another and function as aspects of one process. As Anthony Giddens (1991) put it: “What is the relation between the image that we create and its referent, the supposed real?”

It is not only possible but indeed also normal to see some *representations as imaginary works* (see Walt Disney’s *Imagineering*, 1996) in themselves, apart from the activities that might result from their development. Given this, we believe that imagination is as vivid in the making as in the manifested outcome or event. Indeed, the imaginary has become as real as the physical outcomes and events that we work so hard at (Giddens, 1991). Consequently, there is a confusion of the sphere of images and sphere of a reality whose nature we are less and less able to grasp (Giddens, 1991). When the line between fact and fiction is hard to determine, we pose the question which was germane to our experience, viz., what kind of process is specific to the experience of representational space?

Process of Experiencing Representational Space: the fish-bowl

To start with, the process of experiencing representational space is one of creating a distinction between “space” and “place” (Ashcroft et al. 1995; Clayton and Gregory 1996). For instance, our experience of ‘place’ (at the University of Rhode Island), lies in a complex interaction of language, history and environment (Darian-Smith et al. 1996). We made “place” an issue by creating “space” which was radically intervening within the “workplace” and disrupting its primary modes of representation (Carter et al., 1993). Thereby we separated “space” from “place.”

Instead of the *idea of a relationship* (like, faculty-student), attached to a *real place* (like, College of Business at URI), we created the *idea of a space*, attached to *real people*, viz., people in the fish-bowl. In this imaginary space, the fish-bowl, through words and felt-experience , we agreed to project awareness of our differences, even in our commonality, as the principle theme. (Williams, 1954, 1961, 1977). Our principle theme was to structure our differences into felt-

experiences. As stated by Williams (1977, 132) we are ‘concerned with meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt,’ and with ‘characteristic elements of impulse, restraint, and tone; specifically affective elements of consciousness and relationships: not feeling as against thought, but thought as felt and feeling as thought: practical consciousness of a present kind, in a living and interrelating continuity.’

Allowing the structure of feelings (Williams, 1977) to emerge against the institutional background of the College, was not the same thing as giving a name to the fish-bowl, processing it symbolically and working it for instrumental ends like promotion, accreditation, etc. To explain this double aspect (of the fish-bowl), Lefebvre (1991) uses Lacan’s mirror and mirror-effect to suggest the intimate involvement of the production of social space in the constitution of the self:

On the one hand, one ... relates oneself to space, situates oneself in space. One confronts both an immediacy and an objectivity of one’s own. One places oneself at the centre, designates oneself, and uses oneself as a measure ... On the other hand, space serves as an intermediary or mediating role: beyond each plane surface, beyond each opaque form, ‘one’ seeks to apprehend something else. This tends to turn social space into a transparent medium occupied solely by light, by ‘presences’ and influences (Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 1974, pp182-183).

Creating representational space is looking oneself in the mirror and reacting to one’s perceived image. By presenting oneself, representational space is experientially felt. The feeling experienced is of being ‘observer and observed,’ both, at the same time. The experience of space becomes purely a visual field. Visual experience is a concept associated with the work of Laura Mulvey (1989), whose essay “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” provides a key statement of the relationship between Lacanian psychoanalysis and feminist film theory

Lefebvre (1974) argues that space, which was originally known, marked and produced through all the senses --- taste, smell, touch, sound and sight --- and which was, in all these ways, in intimate conjunction with the ‘intelligence of the body’, comes to be constituted as a purely visual field. He represents this process as a generalization of the mirror-effect, in which social space itself becomes a collective mirror. Unlike Lacan (1977a), however, the importance of the mirror for Lefebvre is not that its reflection ‘constitutes my unity qua subject’ but rather that ‘it transforms what I am into the sign of what I am.’ In effect, ‘space offers itself like a mirror to the thinking ‘subject,’ but, after the manner of Lewis

Carroll, the 'subject' passes through the looking-glass and becomes a lived abstraction.' (Lefebvre, Production, 1974, pp185). This collective --- and historical --- passage marks the transformation from absolute into abstract space. By the time this process is complete, space has no social existence independently of an intense, aggressive and repressive visualization. It is thus --- not symbolically but in fact --- a purely visual space. This rise of the visual realm entails a series of substitutions and displacements by means of which it overwhelms the whole body and usurps its role (Lefebvre, 1974, pp286).

Within the Fish-bowl: An Exercise

At this point it is essential to establish a common understanding about our process of creating representational space by distinguishing the process of conceptualization from its outcome: First, we *recognize* the form of interaction being erected through carefully constructed structures of feelings (Lacan, 1977a; Williams, 1977a).

Second, after this act of recognition exhausts itself, we bring forth a series of gestures in which the relation between the real and the mirrored movements is played. This Lacan suggests, leads to the creation of an "Ideal-I" (from Freud's *Ideal-Ich*). What Lacan's discussion seems to stress is that the I is fixed in a fictive format; our conception of ourselves is necessarily a fiction which we are then put to defend from the onset of the real.

Third, we *enhance* the process of conceptualizing. That is to say, we imaginatively create new forms of interaction which are not necessarily reflections of real individuals so much as fantasy representations (Lacan's "Mirror Stage"), and thereby we enhance the experience of our existing interaction.

In summation, "recognizing" and "enhancing" the process of conceptualizing and thereby re-creating representational space has two major implications: we have to think (conceive) and see (perceive) in ways which extend our natural capabilities and, we've to understand a new sense of self.

Theatre of the Fish-bowl

Setting I: Interior Design

“Ich liebe meines Wessens Dunkelstunden” (Rilke, Rainer 1903)

I love the dark hours of my being.
My mind deepens into them.
There I can find, as in old letters,
the days of my life, already lived,
and held like a legend, and understood.

Then the knowing comes: I can open
to another life that's wide and timeless.

So I am sometimes like a tree
rustling over a gravesite
and making real the dream
of the one its living roots
embrace:

a dream once lost
among sorrows and songs.

Setting II: Landscape

Creating this fish-bowl is a performative act. It is a gesture for the continuation of a story...we're writing as we go along...we do not know where it will lead, nor where it will end...but we know this for sure, it exists in our heads.

This is the story of two characters, matt and sanjiv, and the narrative unfolds in new england, at a small university near the ocean...where they;e swimming in a mental fish-bowl, combining western sensibilities with Eastern ideas...in tryst with purpose, but shunning all direction, except an inner pressure to radicalize. One Viking, the other Sikh, they progress from liberating ego structures, through deeply bled wounds onto downward spirals of hatred and feelings of isolation, and then returning with renewed joy of understanding, forgiveness, and anticipation. Bringing a surging heritage (of bravery in battle) in their bloods, their forays range from existential arguments, to sudden affectionate detentes, and finally onto other arguments. Their relationship mirrors the profound changes in their lifestyles, in their conceptions of work, and of

themselves. Determined to move away from conventional categories (of the division between self and other, of the representation of individuality, of established academic standards) in order to reflect a vision of themselves that transcends these boundaries in a new way. The two characters have an odd volatile nature to their wooing...their interactions end suddenly, and generally with puzzled amusement. They improvise, fabricate, and talk about dimensions and chemistry between people... at times their minds almost meet on the same page, until one makes a tiny faux pas that the other sees as shattering... they're able to maintain this fragility by improvising from moment to moment. That is, they allow themselves to let their personalities and moods influence their performance but not alter the words or circumstances of the scene they enact in their minds... they really have very different ways of thinking, but are able to pass the ball back and forth easily, making for spontaneous fun. So how do they do this in the fish-bowl? Like their characters, matt and sanjiv can't agree. "the more I do it," sanjiv said, "the more I realize the character is me." For matt, "it's a matter of stripping down my defense mechanisms to being that vulnerable again." Sanjiv countered: " I think for me it's more building on top of me. I think."

This interaction ended suddenly as many interactions between matt and sanjiv, with puzzled bemusement.

Act One: Get Real

It cannot be assumed that the fish-bowl is a determined, ordered system intelligible to the audience, the outsider, who can discover the natural laws that govern you, the actor, or that the role of reason is the power guiding you. Rationally and empirically, the fish-bowl has no significance. It can only be seen in terms of the impact that your experience will make on its existence.

Date: April 3, 1997

Regarding: Honey Moons in Hawaii

From: McCavity the Cat

To: Faculty, College of Business Administration, URI

Our paper "Design in Cyberspace" was received by Stunned-silence and then by Uproar. Matt was an excellent Gladiator wielding his Excaliber. Sanjiv is increasingly an Owlsh Merlin... and then there were other fantasies, like Moons of Honey Over Lagoons.

This Memo deals with cyber-complexities and so it will undoubtedly be misread and misunderstood: ambiguity and complexity makes neither good newspaper copy nor good reviews. A primary purpose is how to show things as they are, in all their shades of gray; a second is to show that they are not necessarily what they seem; nor do they always deliver what they promise.

This Memo is about the unreal and how it is changing what and how we produce and consume. What interests me about CyBerspAce is our transformation into fantasy, of the environment into entertainment. Illusion is preferred over reality to the point where illusion is accepted as genuine. Surrogate experience and surrogate environments are a way of life. Distinctions are no longer deemed necessary between what is real and false. The false is an improved version with defects corrected --- accessible and user-friendly.

The relationship between the authentic and the factitious is fascinating and increasingly murky. However, it is attachment to the real that makes me unplug and write this Memo, for what concerns me as a colleague are messages around who and what we are, and our state of mind.

c: Cyborgs: Elvis lives in Blue-Hawaii

Act Two: Play a Unique Role

Your intent is to play a unique role in education: to gain intellect not through verbal discourse per se but through presentation of thought and action; not through involvement with people in an outside world but in a Way Within or an Inward Way that presents world as inner landscape, and so carry out in practice your theme of awareness and unity of self.

3.18.99

My Dear Siddharatha,

During our period of estrangement, our inward journey was around doubts as to “who I am” and, “what I stand for,” i.e. who is the authentic self? Am I this, or, am I that?

Through thought alone, one transcends a situation (of this/that), and thus we transcended our situation, comprising of hurt and feelings of insult, by conceiving the fish-bowl. However, to act upon thought, (beginning with the memo allocating matt’s assistantship to sanjiv), was a contingent act... to survive, to live, to be represented. Our contingent act was a gesture demarcating our representation. Gesture demarcates, and so we conceive of ourselves...

*The fish-bowl is
a contingent act
a gesture
to exist.*

*The betrayal
of ideas
is a death
to being.*

*To open one’s mind
and one’s mental routine
to the world*

is to open one's heart.

From,

your very dear friend, Hermann Hesse.

Act Three: Give Some Feeling

You do not always express Feelings because they're often Confused, and even Frightening. However, to deny Feelings is to make false, restricted work which is inauthentic and fake. In the fish bowl we touch Feelings. We touch through expression, i.e. expressing conceptions and perceptions of things, including each other. Particularly, differences like viking/sikh, west/east, physical/ mental, student/teacher, love/hate, and other such dimensions. We touch Feelings under public gaze. We have a need to go public with every thing that we say or do. We're developing a need to write.

To: Seeker of the Holy Grail

From: Knight of the Round Table

Re: Felt-indignities

Date: April 7, 1999

C:Faculty

I'm sorry you had to suffer indignities which were really meant for me, and that too for the second time around. I'd like to take this experience and introduce you to the topic of framing discourse. I frame our discourse by suggesting that the felt-indignity constitutes the demons and dragons which exist within the subjective-self, and they stalk the corridors of our minds. We objectify these demons through interpretation. This objectification is what "framing" is about for me.

I realise my frame, my interpretation, my metaphor, through felt-experience. To understand oneself through felt-experience is our purpose in the fish-bowl. Consequently, I interpret my framework.

So, as we step onto the third floor Ballentine, we're accosted by a group of faculty who 'jingoistically' greet us with: "here come Laurel and Hardy."

You interpretation, i.e. your framing of their behavior, is distinct from mine. One might say, interpretation or framing or metaphor is culture bound. The difference in our interpretations constitutes opportunity within “negotiated-space;” one of the phenomena being “viewed” in the fish-bowl. Framing in negotiated-space is akin to movie directing.

And WHO are YOU today?

Act Four: Conceive Ambiguity, Create Possibility

Conceive ambiguous space which is nonhierarchical and horizontal; nodes intersecting in random, unregulated networks in which any node can interconnect with any other node. Create *rhizomatic* knowledge by mixing metaphors and celebrate your nomadic and schizophrenic qualities.

In the fish-bowl, we’ve created an ambiguous relationship between ourselves. The ambiguity in our relationship creates possibility because it allows us to be anything we want. This freedom makes us examine each other in ways we hadn’t been able to see before.

Feb/21/99

Sardar,

On Friday, at the end of our conversation (you, the dean, and I) in front of the multicultural center, I felt as if we were explorers and just granted a passport to leave the mainland and to continue our journey to foreign and exotic lands and mental landscapes. So it goes, the Viking (e.g. Leif Eriksson) and Sikh head out to sea “to see.” They possess a common destiny but no plan.

We were three kids joking and conspiring, basically, just having a good time. You and I are destined to be intellectuals – the consciousness of people in power. We are “individuals endowed with a faculty for representing, embodying, articulating a message, a view, an attitude, philosophy or opinion to, as well as for, a public (Said, 1994, 11).” We are on a journey of freedom and knowledge.

But I think I may have lived out my Danish side, that of a Viking, in my younger years. Now I find myself attracted to the French philosophers. A Viking has a heart and soul of a young man. As did Vikings, in college I drank for more beer than any other kind of liquid. Vikings' lives focused on the external world. Although I still retain the respect for women that the Vikings possessed (e.g., contrary to other part of Europe, Viking women were able to own property and to divorce their husbands).

But now I am ready to become French. I want to thank you for allowing me to see this side of me and its strength. My journey is now an internal one. One of consciousness and transcendence. I see it as a journey whose outcome is to become the type of intellectual described by Said.

I feel like Bazarov from Turgenev's book "Fathers and Sons," "...He has severed his ties with his own parents, seems less a son than a sort of self-produced character, challenging routine, assailing mediocrity and clichés, asserting new scientific and unsentimental values that appear to be rational and progressive (Said, 1994, 14-15). I believe this statement also holds true for you.

As we have discovered, and as lesson for others, from forgiveness comes growth, understanding and feeling. There exists a powerful spirit between us that makes others uncomfortable and jealous. It is not something that can be justly described through words. As history tells us, individuals will attempt to destroy or pervert it. We must respect and protect it and use it to assist the underrepresented and disadvantaged. When we connive anything seems possible and if it does not pan out, oh well. There is no stronger force than truth, laughter and joy.

*To destiny,
Mattheu*

Act Five: Create Myth

Between yourselves, viz., Mr. Kappus, T.E Lawrence, the English, Rilke, Sartre, Hesse, the German, Eriksen, Viking, Siddhartha, Buddha, the Indian, Eakins, the American, Dugal, Sikh, Baudelaire, the French, the West, the East,

create an inter-textual and an inter-subjective, shared memory. Indeed, create a context. Lay the foundation.

2.19.99

Dear Mr. Kappus,

Thank you for expressing feelings so eloquently through the mouth of Mr. Matthew . You are Mr. Matthew.

When reading your letters, it is evident that one's authentic self is indeed problematic in a situation where one can be anything one wants. Through this labyrinth lies the inward journey of the subjective self.

I find your words, " Even when overcome by feelings of hate, I still knew that our relationship was a source of great knowledge and understanding" to be most telling of our universal condition, because the central problem is not an abstract one, but one of contingency: what we lack is certainty, confidence, sense of purpose to break paradoxical situations like feelings of hate/ and feelings of great understanding. That is, the more I hate, the more I understand, and the more I understand, the more I hate.

If we had more access to our own past, to memory, to inter-textuality and inter-subjectivity, our sense of purpose would be immensely augmented. Hesse's Steppenwolf expressed this sense of meaning due to re-possession of the past:

"For moments together my heart stood still between delight and sorrow to find how rich was the gallery of my life, and how thronged the soul of the wretched steppenwolf with high eternal stars and constellations... the kernel of this life of mine was noble. It came of high descent and turned, not on trifles, but on the stars..."(Steppenwolf, Hesse).

From your friend, Rainer Maria Rilke

Act Six: Create Reality as Space

I can represent something (like, teacher), if you represent the other (viz., student). And, you can only represent something (like, youth), if I represent the other (viz., mid-life). In this dimension we're bound. Whenever we articulate (other) dimensions, (other) myths, (other) inter-subjectivities, (other) inter-textualities, (other) realities, (other) representational spaces, we ipso facto create a temporal and spatial disjunction.

We occupy several dimensions, but our spirits are free.

2.21.99

Dear Lief Erikson the Viking,

One's position within a relationship, like, Viking-Sikh, has to do with intersubjective interpretation, in other words, position is determined by our past (shared memory), our present (interpretation), and, our future (imagination).

The activities representing the past, present, and future, are overlapping in the new millennium to the extent of becoming indistinguishable. We're experiencing confusion, loss of control, etc. In such a situation, how do I determine my sense of self?

*To do so, I **reveal** a structure, or deconstruct one, or imaginatively construct one...here's mine, for the moment:*

“I was sent to these Arabs as a stranger, unable to think their thoughts or subscribe their beliefs, but charged by duty to lead them forward and to develop to the highest any movement of theirs profitable to England in her war. If I could not assume their character, I could at least conceal my own, and pass among them without evident friction, neither a discord nor a critic but an unnoticed influence. Since I was their fellow I will not be their apologist or advocate. Today in my old garments, I could play the bystander, obedient to the sensibilities of our theatre...but it is more honest to record that these ideas and actions then passed naturally. What now looks wanton or sadic seemed in the field

inevitable or just unimportant routine.” (T.E. Lawrence, Seven Pillars of Wisdom, 1926)

What is our intersubjective interpretation of the above text with regard to us, as Viking-Sikh?

Yours truly,

Sardar Bahadur Dewan Singh

Act Seven: Finale

In the fish-bowl, the interplay between our distinct identities brought complexity and depth to our respective worlds. We interpreted text (and each-other), as we saw (perceived) and felt (experienced) it. Even as we respect another’s text, we brought our subjectivity to bear upon it. We infused the text with our individual being; not the other way round. The text did not infuse us. In other words, we used words as expressions of sensed-thought (felt-experience) rather than as verbalized-thought in promoting the idea of unity above the inner divisions between us. Our interpreted text reveals us and reflects on us.

(from “The Tempest” by William Shakespeare)

*Our revels now are ended,
These are actors, as I foretold you,
We’re all spirits, and are melted into air.*

*And like the baseless fabric of this vision,
The cloud capp’d towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself.*

*Yea all which it inherit shall dissolve,
And like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind.*

*We are such stuff, as dreams are made of,
And our little life is rounded,
With a sleep.*

Curtain

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