

An Approach to New-Thinking: Dynamic Facilitation

An introduction

Michael Erickson, Feb 3, 2004

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I will begin by telling you some things you ALREADY know...

We've been told "forever" that we must
THINK DIFFERENT!



But we are not told HOW...



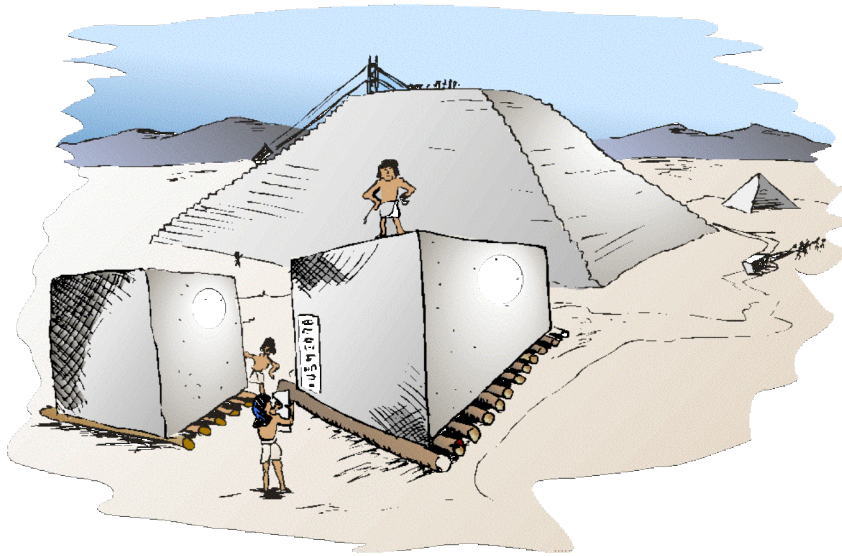
So we continue to do what we always have done (Analysis)... Only more, or in parallel, in teams and always-always we find ourselves frustrated, overwhelmed and in the grips of "Analysis-Paralysis".

To understand the various approaches to facilitation, I believe it's a good Idea to explore where we are

in the history of thought.



How we think, is most often influenced by our cultural concepts about how things work.



For the greatest part of human civilization, the “hierarchic model” of organization has dominated.

The concept that the “few” at the top of the organization were to be in CONTROL of the thought and action of the majority has created a society where it’s considered “normal” to fit ones self into a pre-defined ontology (fancy name for box) that constrains their actions, choices and decisions.

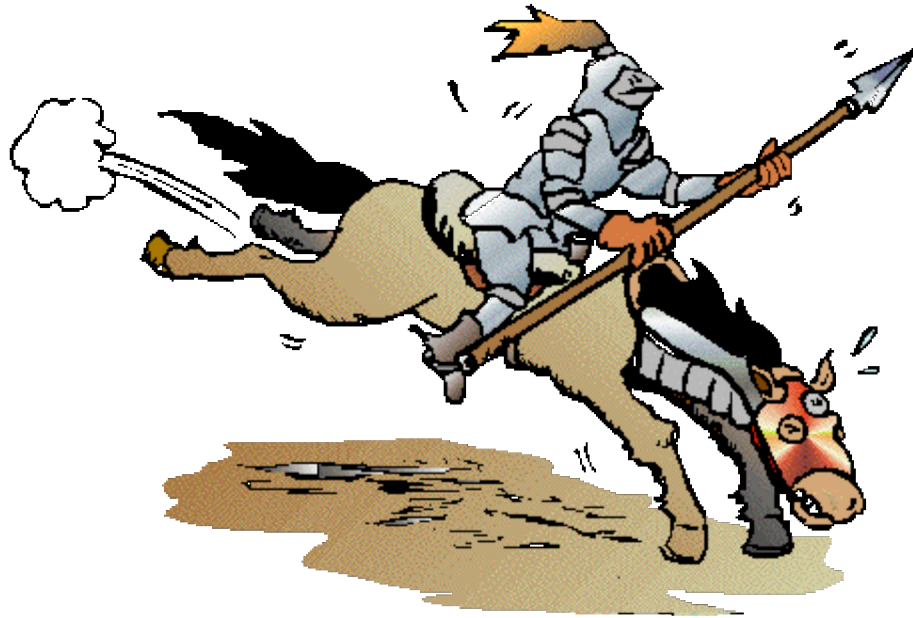




Across the bulk of human history, magic and superstition provided the primary explanation for reality.



What ever passed for “Truth” (or reality) was more often than not decided by **the pronouncements of the oracles** (usually by examination of animal entrails) or **through trial by combat** where the “will of the gods” determined the outcome and assigned meaning.



The concept of “Might Makes Right” (trial by combat) is still with us, in our courts of law (where you hire a lawyer to act as your “champion” in the legal battlefield) AND in meetings, where debate and discussion rule.

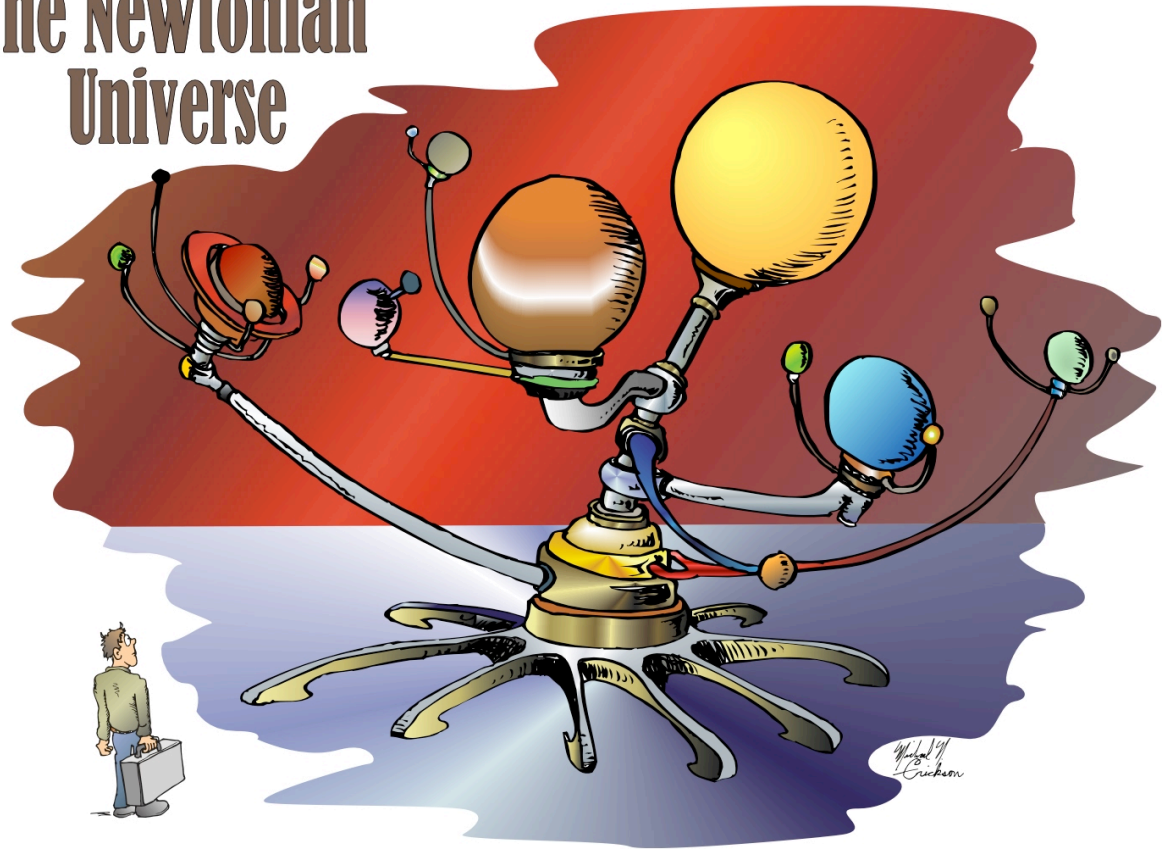


Note: Peter Senge maintains that the word “discussion” comes from the same root words as “concussion, and percussion”... a warlike frame of reference.

**BUT ONLY
in the last
500 years...**



The Newtonian Universe



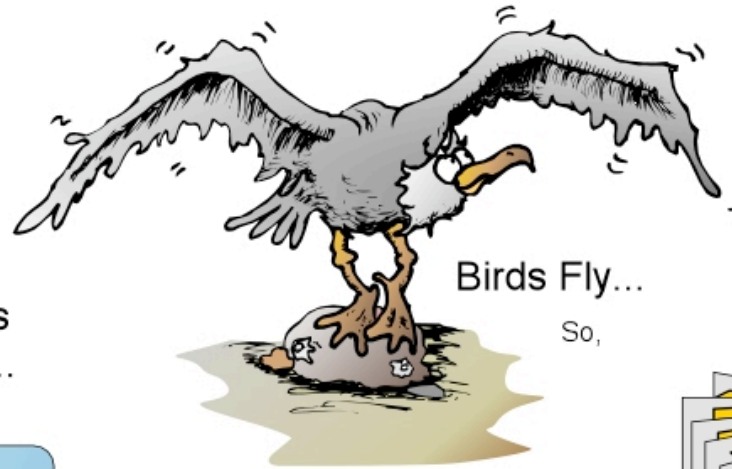
Has the most recent “revolution” in thinking occurred.
At the beginning of the “modern” era,
came the philosophy of “rationalism”

Resulting in an EXPLOSION of human knowledge.

The Scientific Method of Discovery

You start with
some kind of
model...

(Often based on nature)



So,

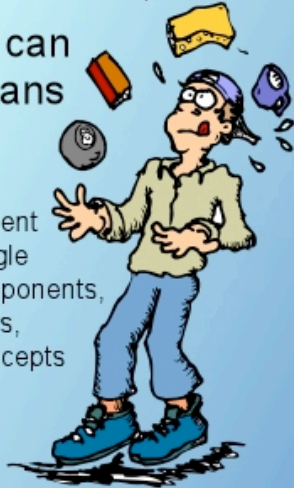


Iterations

So, to answer the question:

How can
Humans
Fly?

we
experiment
and juggle
the components,
functions,
and concepts
until...



A solution takes form.

We create a model, see
how it functions.
Then refine the model
through several iterations.



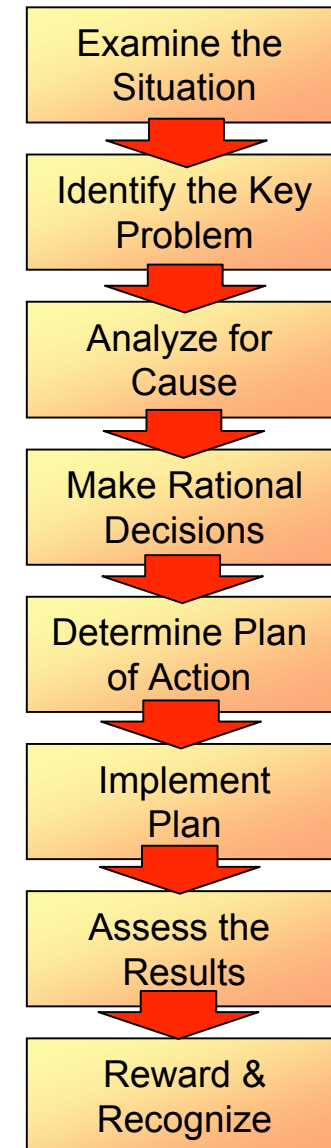
OVERVIEW

The Scientific Model operates by means of “Reductive Thinking”

The “Reductionist” approach (the essence of analysis) breaks ideas, concepts and “things” into their “component parts”.

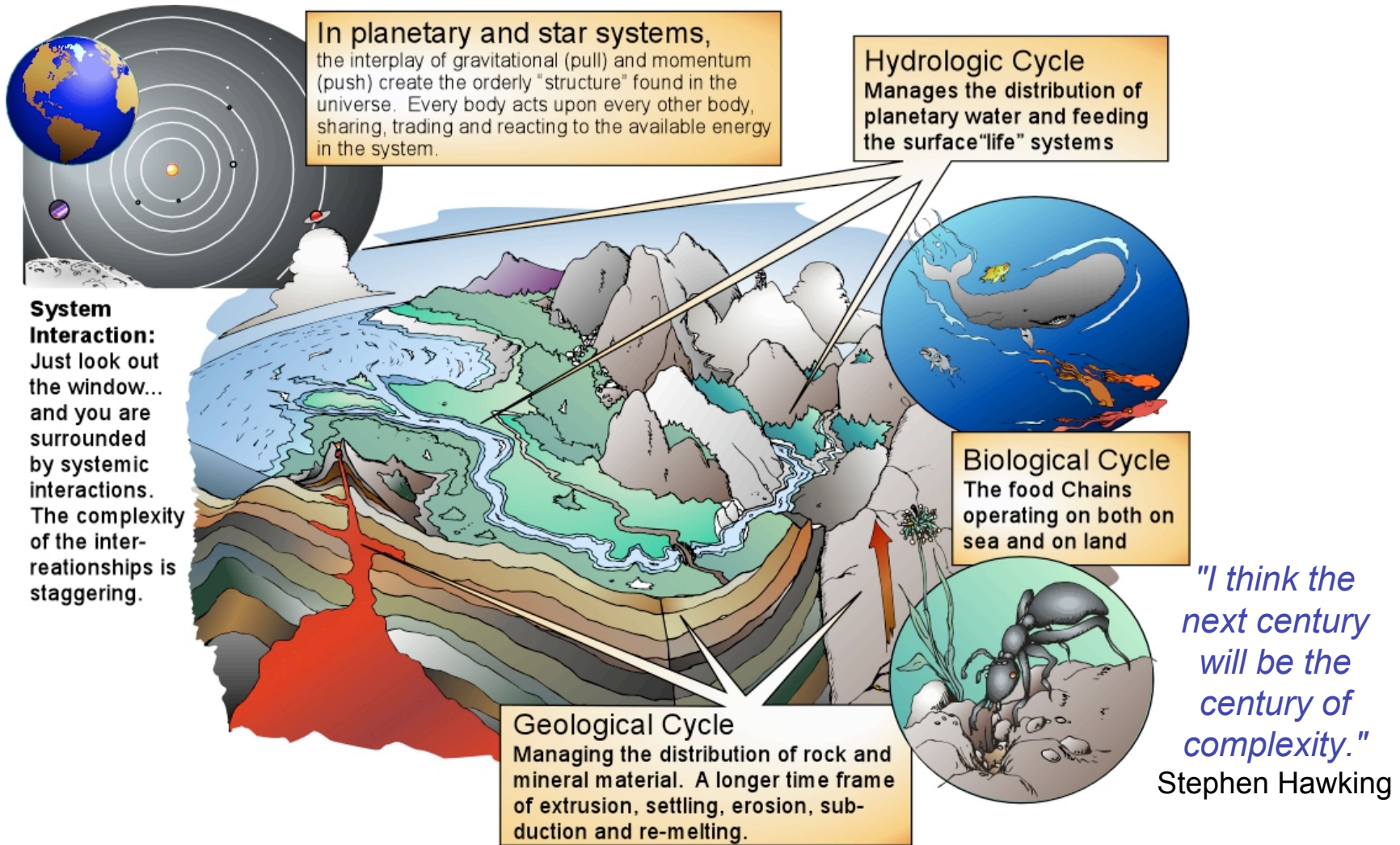
The belief is that to understand the whole, one must understand the parts.

Reductive thinking is assumed to be the “right” and “normal” way to think



But the Rational Model DOES NOT go deep enough.

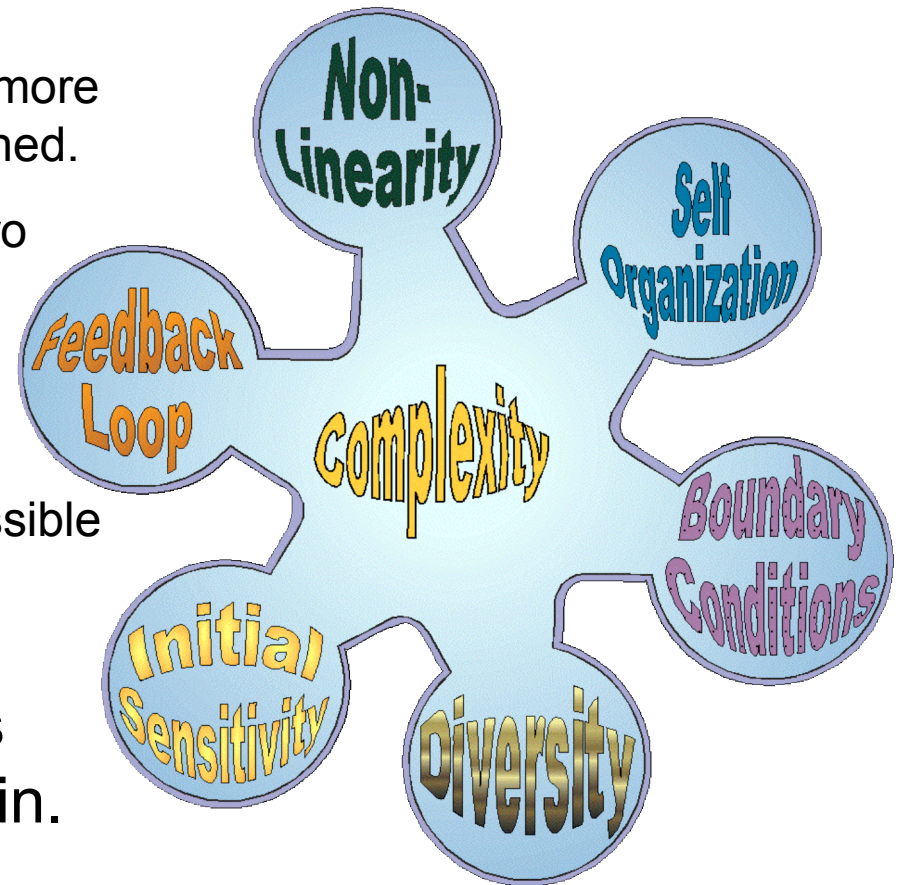
Recent scientific discovery has emphasized the limitations of the rational model. Even in the “real world” there are things going on that are either too complex or can’t be explained by Newton's physics, or objective reasoning and logic.



A number of understandings have “bubbled” to the surface:

- The recognition that reality is infinitely more complex than anyone would have imagined.
- The mechanism discovered at the micro (sub-atomic) level called “the strange attractor” is found to also operate at the macro level (in weather systems, and human dynamics), which is shown to create an “emergent” order that is impossible to predict, but ALWAYS occurs.

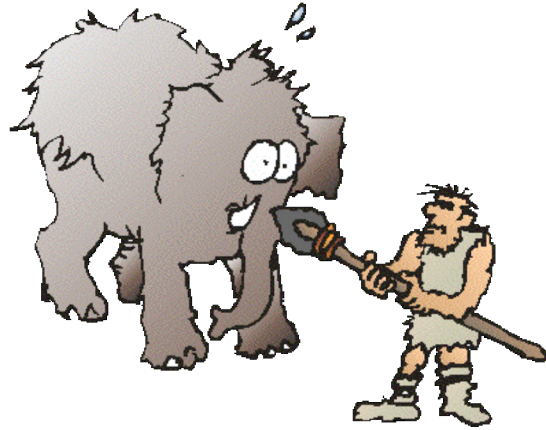
Sending the previous notions about “CONTROL” into a tailspin.



It also proposes that there is something MORE to reality than can be deduced through logic and reason.

Summary:

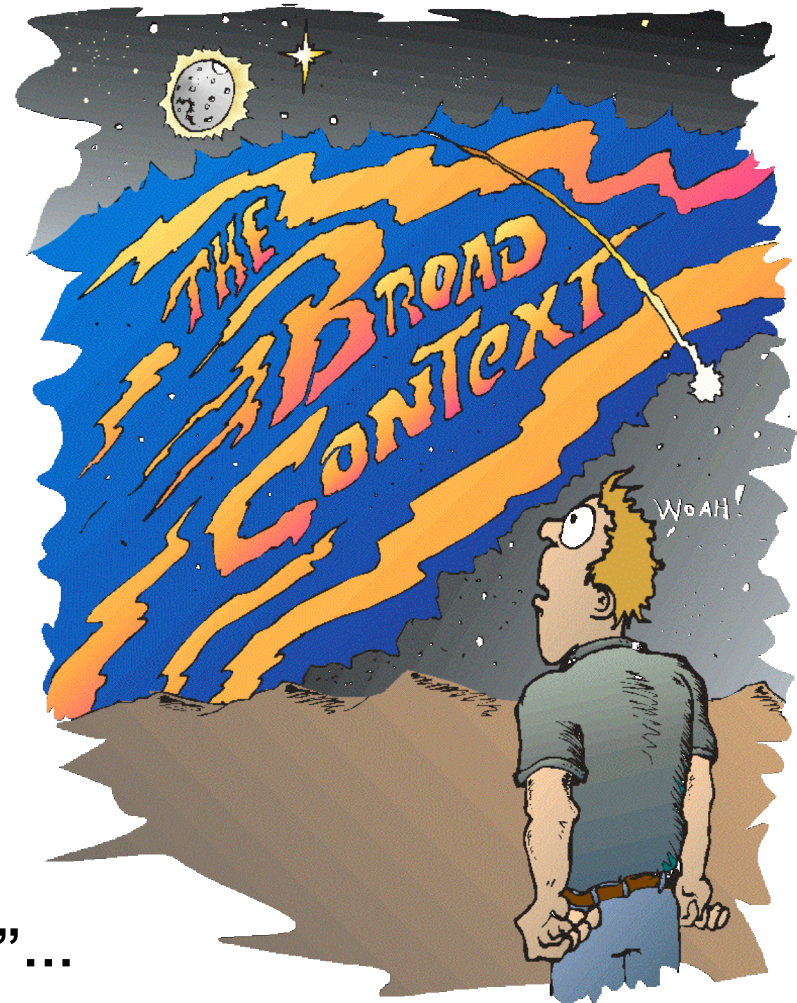
The culture has moved...

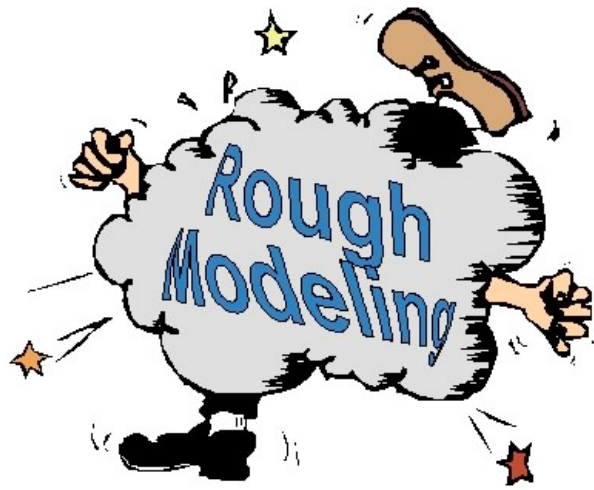


from “primitive”
to “modern”...



from “modern”
to “post-modern”...





Where does Facilitation fit
in this?



The concept of Facilitation is a breakthrough idea.



Up through the modern era, meetings between people were governed by Roberts Rules of Order (or something similar), where decisions are arrived at through an ordered debate and negotiation directed by a chairman.

The
Emphasis in
this kind of
meeting
is on
control.



Lord Farquaad “having a meeting” - torturing the gingerbread man.
(from the PDI/DreamWorks Motion Picture - SHREK)

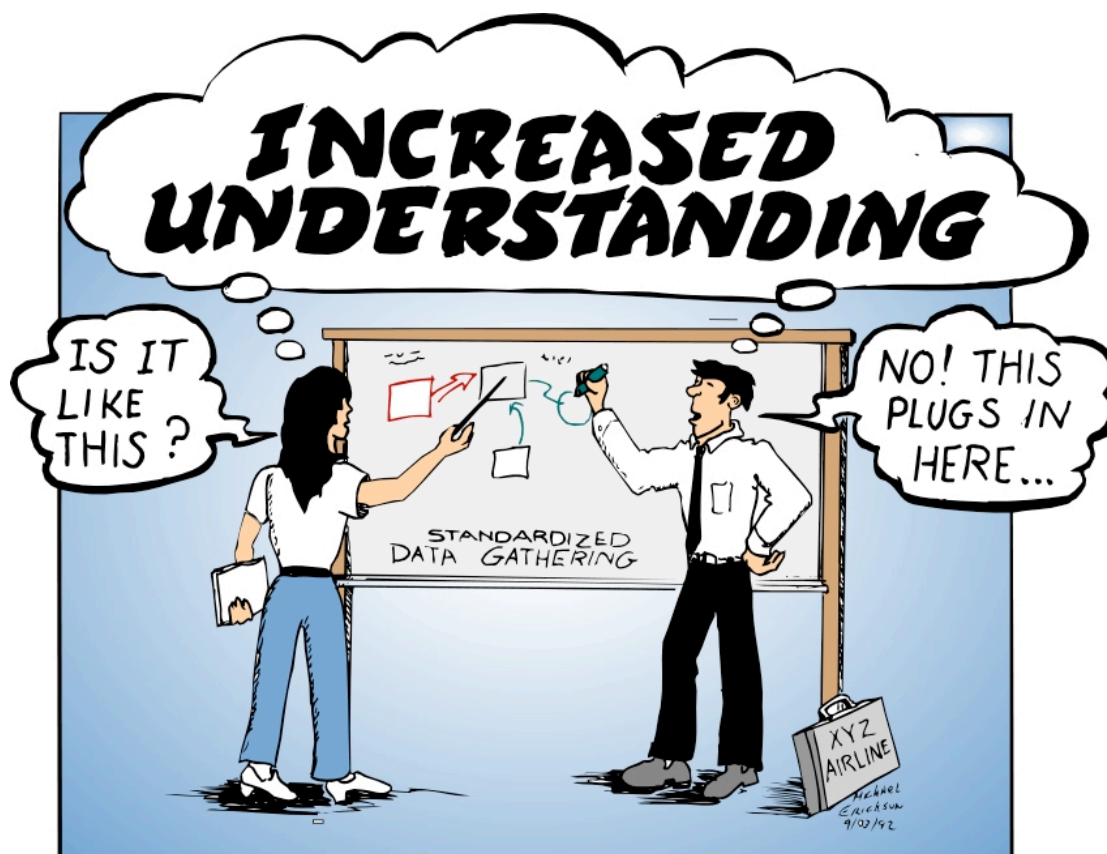
The notion of Control is tied very closely to the notion of hierarchic model.

Someone Controls the direction, the process and the outcome

The concept of facilitation arose after WWII where the knowledge and experience of the individual began to be respected, and a new kind of meeting evolved.

(replacing the old "Roberts Rules of Order").

By CHANGING from a content-directed manager to a process-focused "facilitator", meetings changed from Roles and Defense of position, to "mining" the knowledge and experience of ALL the participants.



The currently popular forms of facilitation still contain a kind of CONTROL that is based upon the “rational” mindset

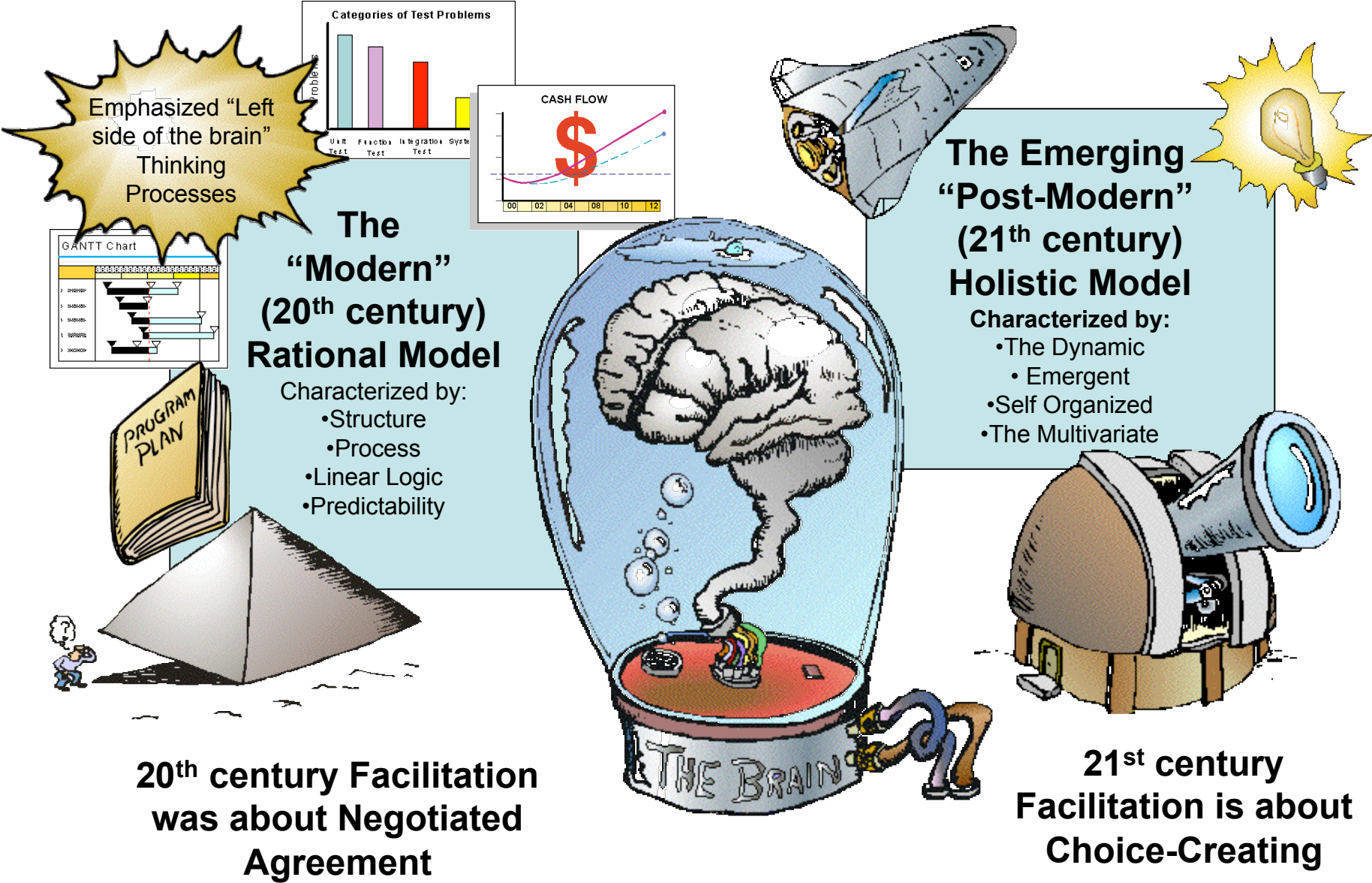
(dependence upon perceptions of “order,” logic and reason).



- Structured methods
- Programmed Group Activities
- The “dreaded” Agenda

This type of facilitation is in transition, just as our cultural frame of mind is in transition.

The transition from 20th century to 21st century modes of thought are loosely based on the 2 hemispheres of the brain.



What Dynamic Facilitation has to offer:

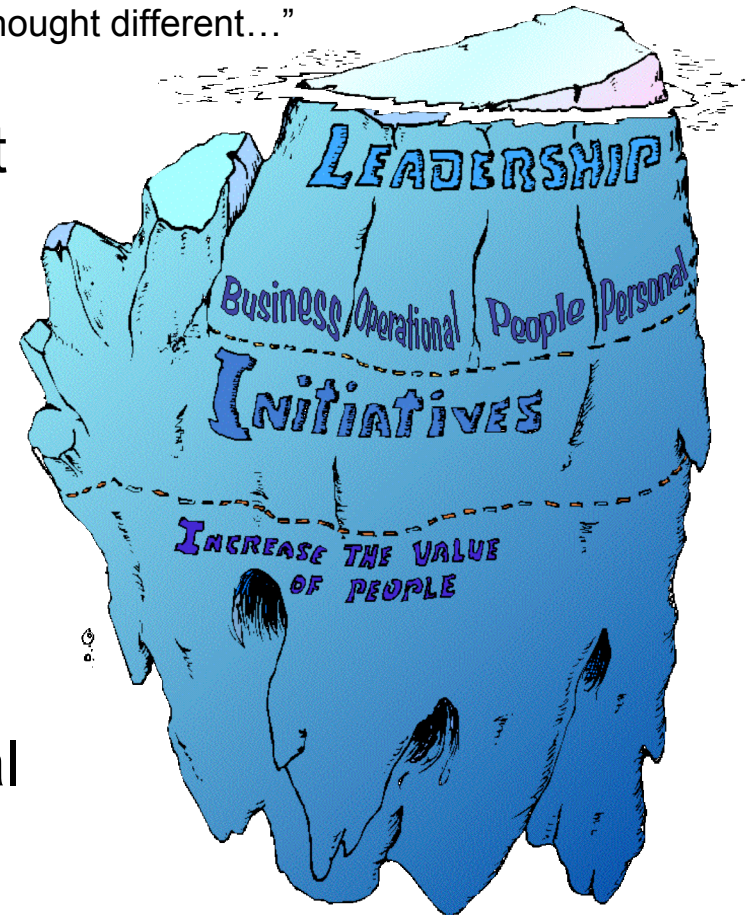
DF was “discovered” by Jim Rough, of Port Townsend WA, while a quality consultant in the timber industry. Facing impossible to solve problems, he “thought different...”

DF is an approach to facilitation that taps other ways of knowing.

It doesn't attempt to “control” a meeting, but it “unleashes” meeting participants.

DF orchestrates the intuitive, creative and emotional aspects of people, while not ignoring the logical and the rational.

It provides a whole new level of ability and opportunity to a group or an organization.



HOW it's done:

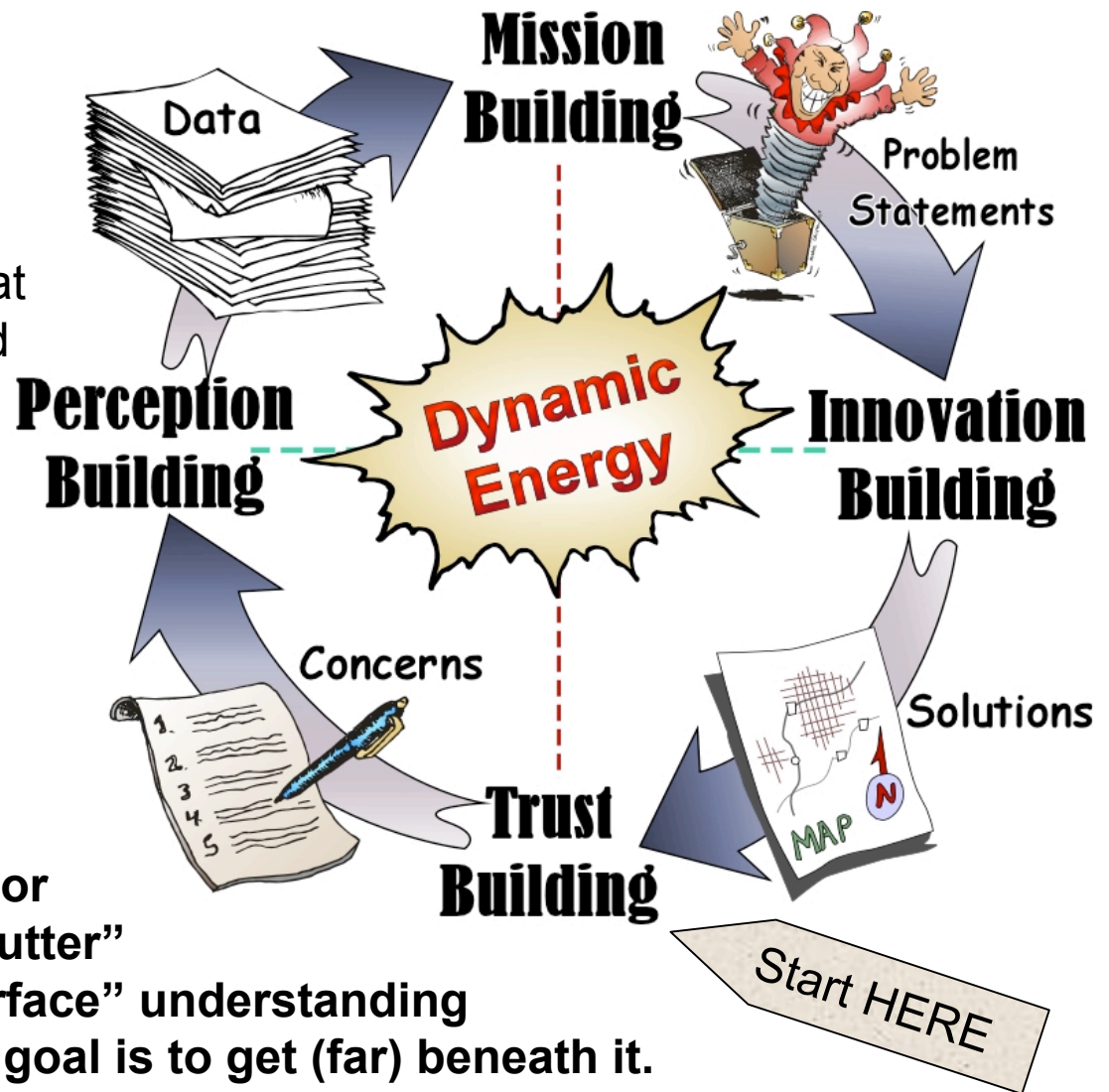
The Choice Creating Flow

The **DF** model forms a wheel.
You start at the **Bottom**
(the trust building phase)

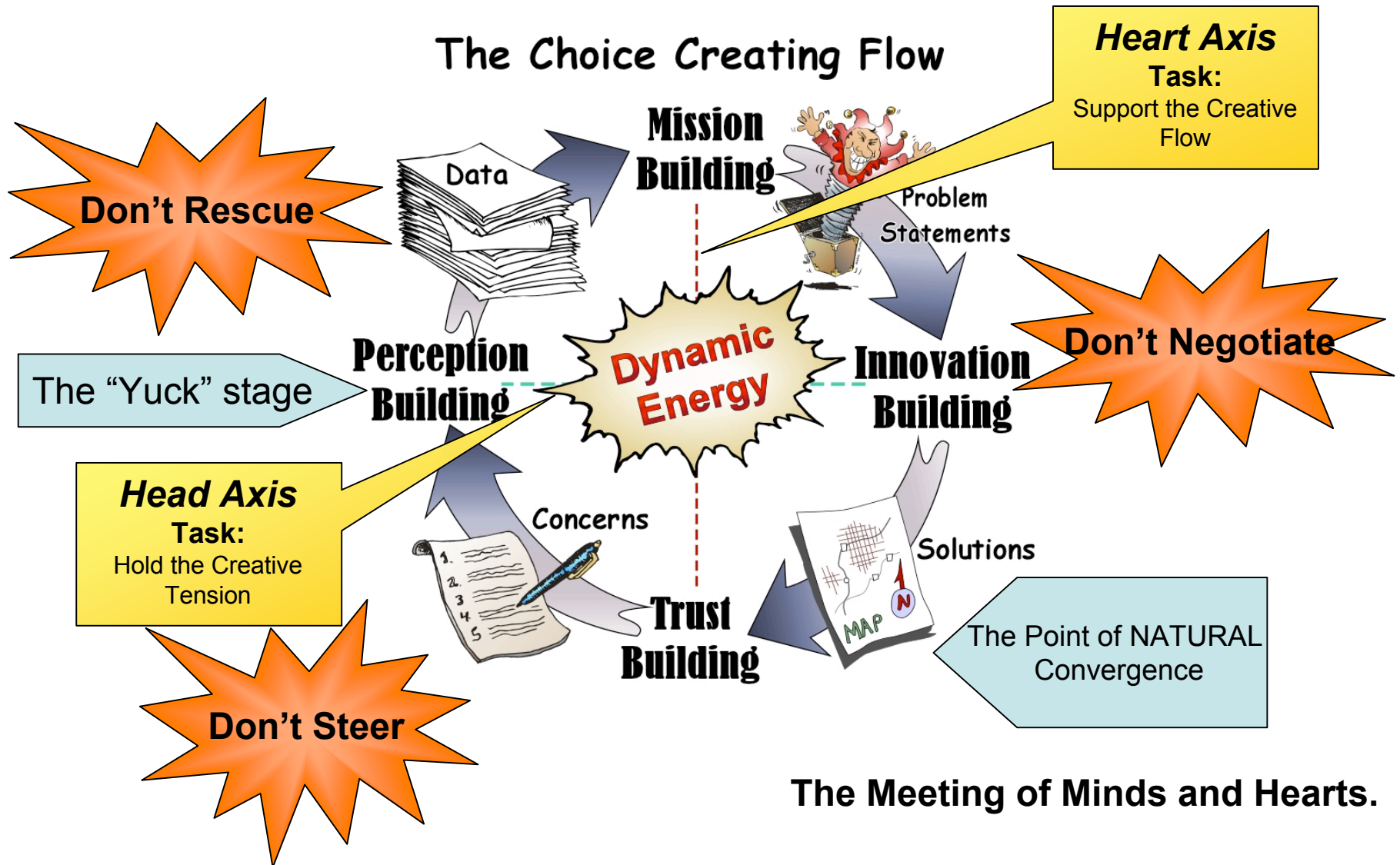
You start with the question that
brings the group together, and
ask them,
“So what’s the Solution?”

The Facilitator must listen
carefully and capture
EVERYTHING.

The point in the
first phase is to unload or
“Purge” the rational “clutter”
that represents the “surface” understanding
held by the group. The goal is to get (far) beneath it.



The Facilitators Role: Supporting Convergence/Divergence



Tools Used:

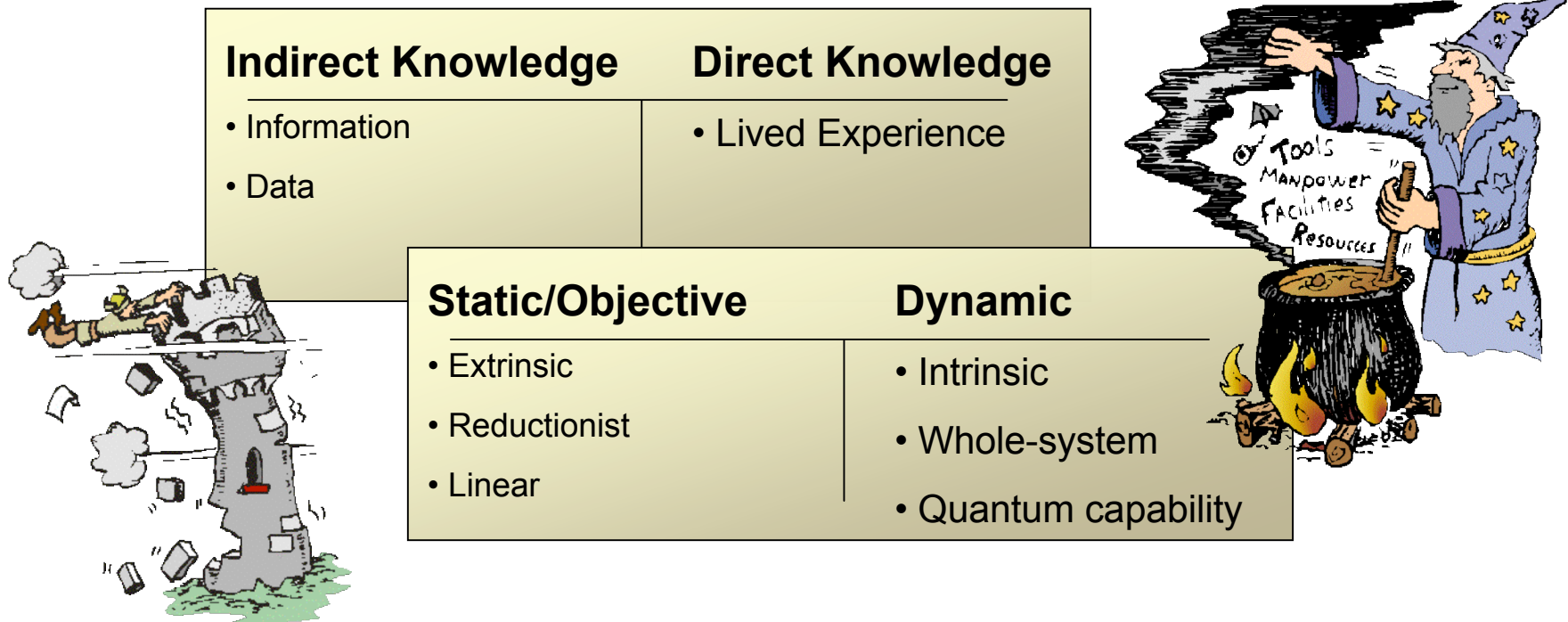
- Reflection
- Question
- Focus on energy

NOT a "challenge" question, but a "discovery" kind of question. Always asking for Solutions!

This focus maximizes the possibility for breakthroughs

- It's ok to feel negative
- It's ok to jump to solutions
- Passion is good!
- No judgment allowed

Comparisons

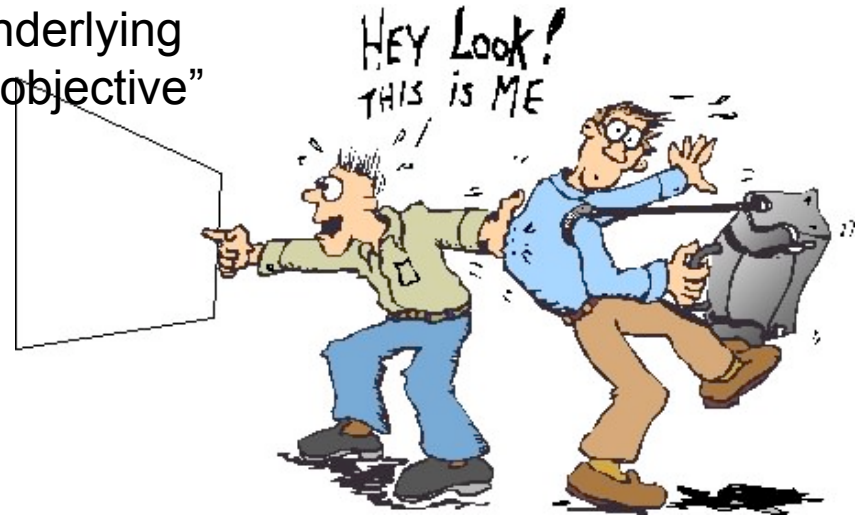


SUMMARY

Dynamic Facilitation evokes Authenticity

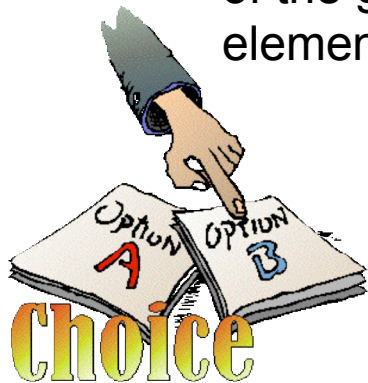
by following the emotional energy - the underlying drive of EVERYTHING in our ostensibly “objective” reality.

DF supports the “Emergent” and the Holistic, without ignoring or denying the value or knowledge contained in the linear, rational and procedural.



DF creates CHOICE and POSSIBILITY

by getting below the surface of the matter at hand, surfacing the underlying questions and issues. DF taps into the emotional energy of the group, discovering the previously unseen connections between elements being discussed.



Dynamic Facilitation excels at tackling seemingly un-solvable or contentious problems.

Recommendation:

Boeing and Complexity

The “Dynamic Facilitation” skill set adds another important dimension to Large Scale System Integration, one of the Boeing “core competencies”.



We are charged with the responsibility to execute our skills with greater alacrity, which suggests that further exploration of the potential in DF will only benefit us.

More information about Dynamic Facilitation can be found at url:
www.tobe.net

Appendix A:



Michael Erickson, covert Dynamic Facilitator

DF married to the Visual Practitioners model to the notion of the “Visual Practitioner” giving the “dynamic” a longer lifespan

Utilizes the same Purge - Yuck Stage – Create – Break Through concept used in DF

Avoids the control, steering or influence while
Maintaining the creative flow as long as possible

