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CHAPTER FOUR

Individual Allusions that Limit Sensory Overload

Delusions Make Sense

Now we delve even deeper into delusions, specifically personal delusions. This book will claim that delusion is the very basis of thought, intelligence, cognition and observation, and even that humanity itself is predisposed to believe in such delusions. Delusions aren't nonsense; quite the opposite. They are the means whereby we sidestep any absurdity in our modes of analysis so that we can glean the benefits. Delusions affect every individual, and consequently the world of any society, any collective. These delusions 'make sense' to the deluded individual since delusion is the mechanism through which the individual internalizes an important part of the world he strives to describe, all the while ignoring the unimportant. When questioned, the validity of these internalized descriptions often remains untouched; and hence, only those elements that can reinforce the established delusion are accepted. These are further internalized within the descriptions that the individual pursues. But these descriptions do not exist in a void; they are usually externalized as part of a community of shared-delusions, represented within communities of practice. In this way conviction is reinforced among the deluded. To the outsider the shared-delusions are absurd, but the deluded choose to stay deluded because of the perceived benefits that accrue to them within their chosen collective.

From their experience of discussing this topic with graduate students, the authors have learned that some are very uncomfortable with this sceptical interpretation of how we humans think about the world, and how we project cognition (so-called understanding) onto it. Some students, particularly those with a scientific background, insist that they perceive what is 'out there' in the physical world of phenomena, exactly as it is. They do, however, have far fewer objections to the idea of shared-delusion when it comes to social constructions. For example they have little difficulty in going along with statements that money is a belief system, or that history is the reflection of data from the past in the mirror of contemporary concerns.

However, to the sceptic, everything is delusion: from the formation of cultures to our very individual and private perceptions of 'being-in-the-world'

(Heidegger, 1962), to the way science is constructed and has evolved. For it is impossible to tell whether reality is as it is personally experienced in sense data. There is a world of difference between any reality out there, whatever 'out there' is, and the imagined reality formed by what the individual being does with both sense data and methodological representations of reality. Heidegger's concept of being-in-the-world and the perception of being there are definitely not the same. We cannot even know if reality is consistent with sense data, because we only perceive what is already consistent. After all, under hypnosis we can be jabbed with a needle and yet feel no pain, or smell disgusting imaginary odours, or consider ourselves nailed to the spot unable to move, or a million and one other sensory sensations impressed on us by the hypnotist.

So what if our society is the hypnotist, and we experience everything in a way that we have been pre-programmed and disposed to expect? What if there are other dimensions, available only to senses we do not have? That possibility is of no consequence. It is our blessing, and our curse, to be trapped in three dimensions with the senses we do have, or rather with the senses we have been deluded into having.

Keys to the Kingdom of Knowledge

Therefore the individual must resort to allusions¹ in order to arrive at the truth about things, or rather an allusion of truth. Such *a priori* truths are mere provisional assumptions. Allusions are unverifiable suppositions about the world: implied or indirect references. The individual treats such conceptions of entities in the world with the use of metaphors, as if they are the entities themselves, and in doing so he dissolves his sensations into metaphor. In this way he projects his suppositions out onto the world, to collect and feed back sense data, which he then uses to project his suppositions out onto the world, to collect and feed back sense data, and so on ....

It is the fundamental human delusion to treat such dynamic allusion as truth. Each individual life and each human community is a journey of construction, building on these allusions to form a system of complex claims (personal truths = delusions) concerning the world. These claims are broad-ranging, more or less consistent, rationally defensible, and most importantly communicable to others; although this too is a delusion; albeit a shared one.

Each of us is unable to find any ultimate truth, except as a private delusion. Our very personal experiences are not open to any form of external enquiry,

as every human being is inevitably cut off from having knowledge of the mind of another. It is not at all clear to what extent we even have any knowledge of our own mind. How can any system fully describe itself? Consequently we must abandon any search for certainty in human knowledge. We have to act 'as if' we are in the world of phenomena, 'as if' that world is real, 'as if' we are not self- or socially hypnotized. Why? Because we are unable to operate in any other way. Why is that? Because this is what we humans do.

Existence has 'neither cause, nor reason, nor necessity' (Sartre, 2003). The sceptic's position is that there is a fundamental flaw in all theorizing, including what the authors are doing when writing this book, namely the deluded search for description/explanation/truth. How can we humans find what isn't there? Nevertheless, we must persevere with our existence. In order to do that, we must impose meaning on the world with allusions. These unverifiable interpretations are contrived into private delusions that are themselves a leap of 'animal faith' (Santayana, 1955); delusions that are ultimately based on biological and social factors. Such a leap of faith, the total and unqualified acceptance of delusion, is only justified and justifiable by the actions it inspires, and the appropriateness of those actions within a personal meaning. The only utility in the futility of searching for the truth is that it may help each of us develop a workable clarification of personal appropriateness.

Humanity has not captured the keys to the kingdom of knowledge. 'Only very naive people are capable of believing that the nature of man could be transformed into a purely logical one' (Nietzsche and Hollingdale, 1996). 'The world is logical because we made it logical' (Nietzsche et al., 1968). We made it logical with both hardware: our evolving genetic makeup, and the stabilizing physical artefacts we place in the world to reduce its apparent complexity; and software: data and institutions transferred across the generations. We made it logical in the eons of feedback that is life on earth. We are trapped in this mode of thinking; forced to build within a framework of ciphers that is 'knowledge', a cage set down before the dawn of intelligence. 'Just as certain human organs recall the stage of evolution of the fish, so there must also be in our brain grooves and convolutions that correspond to that cast of mind: but these grooves and convolutions are no longer the riverbed along which the stream of our sensibility runs' (Nietzsche and Hollingdale, 1996). We have merely developed upon the fishes' eye view of the world, and cultivated a more sophisticated schema. We place our intelligence on top of what is 'always and already' there (Heidegger, 1962).

If Darwin was right, then the simple organism in the primordial soup has certainly come a long way within its self-reference, self-replication and self-preservation.

No Knowing About Knowing

So how then can there be any knowing about knowing? The problem with answering questions like 'who are we?' or 'where does the world come from?' is that we only have ourselves as the means of answering. 'How should a tool (our intellect) be able to criticize itself when it has only itself for the critique?' (Nietzsche et al., 1968) How can we 'look around our own corner?' (Nietzsche, 2006) For we, as individuals, are simultaneously the observer and the observed in each observation; the subject and the object of each description. In observing, the observer changes what is observed, and is also changed by the observation. Irrevocably intertwined, these schizophrenic pairings compel us to accept an inevitable uncertainty principle in all that we do. There can be no superiority in theoretical reflection. There is no detachment from the world no matter how much we contemplate, theorize or introduce principles; for we are both the subject and predicate of every sentence.

We each have inherited repetitive and unthinking skills, everyday practices within our private and shared-delusions for coping with the world, although we have no exact way of representing them explicitly. Our brains and thoughts are themselves an epiphenomenon, the result of what we have become through the reflexive operations of cognition and observation. But in that becoming they are the culmination of a 'curriculum of an earlier mankind' (Nietzsche and Hollingdale, 1996), even a pre-mankind. There remains a residue of the past in all of us, a reptilian brain forming aquatic behaviour patterns: and it cannot be ignored by an act of rational will, whatever we would like to believe. In times of sensory overload, of pressure, of fear, the throwback in us will always reappear.

Plato considered the human condition to be in a permanent state of flux, regardless of how the world appears to our senses. The metaphor he used was of a community living in a cave, observing flickering shadows from the real world of phenomena projected onto the cave wall (Plato and Lee, 1974). Plato went on to raise a whole range of issues; however, this is where he and the authors part company. To them the big question is whether it is possible for an enlightened individual to go out of the cave into the sunshine, and see the 'reality' other than as vain shadows, other than as imposed projections

(as delusions)? This book's sceptical position in this human dilemma is unequivocal: we are trapped as individuals inside a cave of private sensory experience, of delusions. Our heads are the cave, and the shadows are the projection of our senses; senses that form the cave entrance. There is no going outside of consciousness and directly accessing reality. Within that trap, we develop a temporary niche. We adjust to the circumstances of our experiences and convince our intellect accordingly, so that these circumstances do not interfere overmuch with the process of developing and sustaining that niche.

In Plato's example, even though the collective is trapped inside the cave, each member watching the passing shadows projected onto the wall, one individual does make it outside. Plato mentions that he breaks free from his trap, exits the cave and is faced with the marvel that is *reality*. That individual goes out into the sunshine, but finds it difficult to adjust. It takes him a considerable amount of time to develop a new but temporary niche; but he is under the impression, momentarily at least, that he has escaped his trap. Convinced of the validity of his belief system, now that he has seen the light, he feels he must go back into the cave to set his fellows free so that they too can see the light. But a number of problems must appear. He has developed a new and different perspective on the world, and so it is not easy for him to go back into the cave. What is more, his fellows are not easily convinced that they should abandon their own niche for this new one. Of course the enlightened individual could himself start thinking of the new/outside world as yet another cave, another trap.

Thankfully, for most practical purposes the existence of these traps doesn't matter. Each individual simply adjusts his behaviour to find and take advantage of a new niche within his own trap. This is just as well since there is no escaping outside the cave of being that is 'I'. There is no going outside into an enlightening sunshine. Each of us is forever trapped in our unique personal world of shadows.

Nevertheless, what we can achieve by manipulating those shadows is truly magical. I myself am a being-in-the-world, and so I am not just a passive observer of the shadows. Yet I may appreciate no more than my interpretation of what my senses tell me: *nihil in intellectu nisi prius in sensu*. 'Nothing in the intellect unless first in the senses': an old empiricist aphorism. Therefore, I have no option other than to describe that unknowable terrain in terms of the delusional interpretations of my sense data, my observations and cognition. My descriptions are the product of my imagination. It enables

me to make my way in the 'natural world' by interpreting not only my sense data but also my considered actions within this crazy 'unnatural' artificial (linear) world of my own creation, individually, not knowing and never knowing what 'natural' (non-linear) is. It is all impossible to describe, other than through delusions. What is more: 'There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so.'²

By considering different biological organisms, the paradox of objectivity quickly exposes itself. When observing a tree, the different sensory data systems of different organisms (say a human being, or a cat, or a butterfly) will 'see' a completely different tree, which renders the question 'what does the tree actually look like?' totally meaningless. What could the underlying substance, the hypostasis, be for the tree to allow all these different interpretations? The 'real world' is there not to be real, but to permit a series of different reflexive constructions/frames that will emerge out of delusion: in other words, to permit description via a multiplicity of simultaneous delusions, each being species-specific.

When joined together in groups, we suppose that humans communicate via the same *understanding* (rather cognition) of the world, when we are merely sharing similar frames emerging from our delusions. For this unknown and unknowable domain is always one step beyond our imaginings, despite our belief that our reach can go beyond our grasp. Whatever the ultimate social construction among groups of people, whether it relates to the fate of nations, of companies, of families or of friends, everything comes back to the individual and the interpretation of personal sense data. Not only the five senses³ of touch, smell, taste, hearing and sight, but also the sixth sense of awareness/cognitive reflection, of being-in-the-world, which we mistakenly identify as thought. Even knowing what our senses are is a delusion. All attempts to understand ourselves are in vain; the eye cannot see itself, except as a reflection; nor can the other senses sense themselves. It is all smoke and mirrors. It is the fallacy: 'I think, therefore I am knowing',⁴ and ultimately futile. What do I know and how do I know it, when 'all that I know is that I know nothing?'⁵

An Evolutionary Advantage

'I would like to treat the question of the value of knowledge as it would be treated by a cold angel who sees through the whole shabby farce. Without anger, but without warmth' (Nietzsche and Breazeale, 1999). Thinking is an artificial arrangement for the purpose of intelligibility. Thinking about what

we know, and how we know it, is an indulgence, is an irrelevancy. How magically amazing it is to believe that thoughts can trigger other thoughts: yet another self-reference. What is important is not how or why we derive these delusions from our sense data, rather that we do create them. Through our thought-created delusions of what we think we know (an epistemological delusion), we are able to make our way in the world. Our particularly human mode of thinking, the general way in which *homo sapiens* implements this process, is what separates us from other species, and makes humanity what it is. We do not know the truth about things, but thankfully these delusions deliver an evolutionary advantage for operating in our ever-evolving self-selecting niche.

So if it is not truth, what exactly is this information we glean about our world? Mere data that lends support to delusion; evidence consistent with delusion, and that reinforces delusion. And why? Because considered action can stem from delusion; the alternative is immobility or arbitrary action.

Why are the authors so insistent about delusion, and exactly what is its utility? Being in the world of phenomena, we humans negotiate our way by acting upon and reacting to data received from our senses. In response to that data, each of us must resort to one of 'the 3f's': freeze, fight or flee; but which one? Unfortunately the world has always and will always overwhelm the senses of the unprepared with a vast overload of data. It was the same when humanity roamed the savannah, or when Nietzsche's pre-human fish swam the riverbed. Today we complain of a computer-generated-information overload, but it is no different from all the other previous cognitive overloads: we just think it is different because we haven't learned to cope with it yet, because we haven't learned a simple means of (the delusions for) coping.

We may construct search engines that operate in this technological realm in the hope of cutting down on the underlying complexity, but in doing so we fail to realize that these possibilities are restricted both by the choice of algorithmic representations and by the interaction that human activity systems have with those technologies. It is not only reality, but virtual reality too that becomes constructed. However, far more important than the simplistic analysis of these two and/or other realities being socially constructed is this book's insistence that all reality is observationally constructed.

But why are we not aware of that tamed information overload from yesterday's complexity, or if aware why do we choose to ignore this? Because our delusions, our belief in internally created schemas of the world, protect us. We can't take in everything; there's just too much. We'd be swamped.

Cutting down on complexity becomes a necessity. The structural coupling of an individual's observation and cognition acts as a filter, and thereby simplifies the data. The data is reduced into categories, and by contriving patterns/frames around those categories we can reflect on that data, make decisions and/or communicate it with others.

'The map is not the terrain.' Nevertheless, the individual can benefit by arranging, simplifying, supposing and schematizing, and interpreting sense data as a delusion (a map) appropriate for dealing with the context in which he finds himself. There is an advantage in ignoring the fallacy of residual categories that would otherwise disrupt our mapmaking. The overall approach is essentially a sympathetic magic, very little different to divination described previously. Such magic is a belief that ritualistic behaviour, which promotes the validity of delusions, can represent and then replace the world. Ritual acts are supposed somehow to instigate a causal chain of events that ultimately affect the real world and deliver the contents of an advantageous wish list. This is what Nietzsche meant in the quotation mentioned earlier: 'When one rows, it is not the rowing that moves the ship; rather rowing is simply a magical ceremony by which one compels a demon to move it' (Nietzsche and Hollingdale, 1996). By manipulating structures/categories on the map, namely the frames within a delusion, we assume that this will affect both the terrain and the artefacts we place in it, in an equivalent way, and that consistencies/regularities in the frame will carry over onto the terrain. That this seems to work, and that empirically we sense objects in the world behaving exactly as expected, most of the time, is truly magical.

These delusions need not remain inside our heads. Not only can we humans externalize the regularities in our delusions in the form of frames suitable for communicating, but also we can make them physical, tangible, as artefacts. We place these frozen and hence stable frames in the world, where we believe they stay unchanged exactly as we made them. There they deny the complexity in the *Chaos* and the ensuing uncertainty by reinforcing our interpretation of the world. Order coalesces around these physical artefacts, thereby seeming to make the world tidy. Our delusions, both the frozen and the communicated, both the shared and the nebulous cerebral kinds, form a pragmatic sink for the noise surrounding our senses, as well as a springboard for opportunistic action. We make the world even tidier by placing structures in the world; however, that too is nothing but a short-term delusion. Breakdown and noise are inevitable, and a measure of the ultimate failure of every delusion.

Making Sense with Delusions and Frames

Nevertheless, it all seems to make sense to us. Even the words 'it makes sense' imply that to an individual 'it' is consistent with his accepted set of personal delusions. The individual ritualizes away all recognition of this belief system, pushing it into the background of thought so as not to interfere with cognition. Thence all projected assumptions look eminently sensible and self-evident. The individual no longer needs to be convinced by his delusions. Indeed, in the process we call learning, such self-evidence is used to justify acceptance of the next shared-delusion/frame to come along. If the individual is convinced, then that too is absorbed into the unquestioned and unquestioning background of all his thinking. That it is all delusion doesn't really matter, because there is an evolutionary advantage in such delusions, in that not only do they impart the ability to act by creating options, directions, consistency of behaviour, predictability and repeatability, but also they are the means whereby we humans adapt to our ever-changing surroundings.

The individual must use the delusions at his disposal to sample the context in a form of spontaneous matching. By contrasting the matches against the options available, he limits both the input of sense data and the choice of action. In other words, he jumps to conclusions, for his is no passive, impersonal or objective analysis. His particular purposes and preferences arbitrate in the continuous feedback until a choice is made. In this way his delusions (hopefully) disperse irrelevant information, so that he can deal with what he considers the important events at hand, and in an appropriate manner. The individual observer selects amongst the data. He cannot but be partial, and hence he disregards much. In doing so he simplifies, and he then deludes himself that he has clarified the situation. Everything irrelevant just disappears. As Einstein commented to Heisenberg during the latter's Berlin lecture in 1926: 'whether you see a thing or not depends on the theory which you use. It is theory which decides what can be observed' (Salam, 1990).

Frames, a delusional way of externalizing regularities within the meaning that is buried in a delusion, are fundamentally impelled by the human *will to categorize*. They filter out the overload of sense data by limiting the flow of information, and enable our thoughts to crystallize on a course of action. And the plural is used here: frames. No single frame can be a complete description of the terrain; nor can the delusion generated by an observer of the terrain. Each frame is linear, simplified and partial, in the sense that the need for action delimits what data is included, and what excluded. Therefore,

we humans must develop numerous frames corresponding to different conditions, each limited from its very inception by the appropriateness of its application in different situations. They are all superimposed onto a totality of delusions from which we as individuals operate, so that we may both reflect on and consequently deal with any particular situation in the best possible way (a subjective decision of course), and communicate those reflections to others or reflect on it ourselves.

But it must be made clear: there is no ultimate sense in our bizarre world. There is no Akashic Field we can aspire to. Hence, individually and in groups, we must make sense of the world by categorizing it with all-encompassing labels synthesized from the previously potent delusions that have come down to us as individuals. What makes sense? Any situation where what we make of the input from our senses conforms to preconceived notions. The delusions are then individually built up by each of us in becoming what we are, what we have become. Through early childhood we gradually come to believe that these delusions tell us the truth about things, the meaning of things; that the world is as it appears to us via our delusions. Like a caged tiger, we each stalk up and down, penned in by delusions, in a display of displacement activity.

We can do nothing about the delusions built into the physical functioning of being human: into what can be called human hardware or more colourfully 'wetware'. However, the delusions in human software, both private and shared (e.g. ideas, culture), are there for the taking, for the making. For these delusions, the products of the past, are the ways in which we deal with so-called reality in becoming what we are. This sceptical position is not nihilism. The sorcery of delusions does not deny that a 'universal' is out there; however, it asserts that any universal (if there is one) is an unknown and unknowable terrain. We can never understand what that reality is, because we are limited by the reach of our senses, by our representation of such a reality, and ultimately by our cognition of it.

Plato and Bishop Berkeley

We are back in Plato's cave, or with Bishop George Berkeley's old chestnut: 'if a tree falls in a forest, and no one is there to hear it, it makes no sound'. Following Berkeley's sceptical logic to its ultimate conclusion, who is to say the tree has fallen, and did not come into existence at that moment and in that position? Eighteenth-century cleric, Berkeley, would argue that a room disappeared when he left it: '... all those bodies which compose the

mighty world – have not any subsistence without a mind’ (Berkeley and Dancy, 1998). In other words, there is no existence of matter independent of mind: ‘to be, is to be perceived’. Whether or not the room is lying dormant somewhere in the background, it (if there is an it) is unperceived because there is no sensory contact. Ditto the fleeting sound in the forest. Does the tree make a sound? Does the room exist? Who cares? Let’s operate as if they do. In this respect Berkeley is typical of many of today’s sceptics who dismiss the existence of objects outside of experiencing them.

Actually, Berkeley was alluding to what today is called orders of observation. The act/process/operation of observing the tree is called a first-order observation. However, in the case where the tree is unobserved and only imagined/remembered or communicated by another observer, a second-order observation is brought into play. Here the observer creates an abstraction that is inferred to be a third party who is observing the tree. However, as Berkeley is reminding us, an abstraction doesn’t have any senses, only ones imagined by the cognitive observer.

We are biologically constrained to interpret phenomena in the world, like the room and the falling tree, as sight and sound, as sense data. However, there is no colour or sound in the world, only unknowable sources that trigger our senses; the colours and sounds are all in our heads. They can only exist as first-order observations. Does it actually matter if the sources are really out there? Berkeley’s message is not that we magic sense data out of a void; rather, by our senses (that for him proceeded from God), we interpret phenomena that are necessarily as they are. These phenomena, whatever they are, lie in the realm of necessity, what are necessarily so, but which are unknown and unknowable, although variously interpretable. That interpretation occurs in the realm of imagination inside our heads, where the phenomena become transformed as sight and sound etc. There we imagine into existence an interpretation of the phenomena as a reaction to our sense data, but that data are necessarily separated from the fabric of their source. Since there is no evidence of either the room or the tree, other than in sense and memory, they are devoid of the existence conjectured (conjured up) by human interpretative delusions. To the Bishop, existence is sensory awareness in the present (or rather the immediate future) via mental schemas, not a prior placement in a terrain previously imagined into existence. In deluding ourselves in this way so as to avoid sensory overload, all irrelevant data become inconvenient background noise and simply cease to be noticed.

A similar idea surfaced in the nineteenth century when Lord Kelvin stated:

I often say that when you can measure what you are speaking about, and express it in numbers, you know something about it; but when you cannot express it in numbers, your knowledge is of a meagre and unsatisfactory kind; it may be the beginning of knowledge, but you have scarcely, in your thoughts, advanced to the stage of science, whatever the matter may be (Kelvin, 1883).

This persistence in the intrinsic validity of mathematical notation becomes more evident in another quote from Lord Kelvin: 'Do not imagine that mathematics is hard and crabbed, and repulsive to common sense. It is merely the etherealization of common sense' (Thompson, 2006). This assertion alone signifies both how persistent the delusion of measurement has become in modern thought and how the world as we know it is seen through the delusion of measurement. Thus, Lord Kelvin went further than Berkeley in saying that for a phenomenon to exist at all it is not sufficient that the phenomenon be sensed; it must also be measurable, and on being measured, turned into a number. Protagoras then brings us back full circle: 'man is the measure of all things'.

Trapped in the world of our senses, our thought-created and thought-limited consciousness builds up an edifice of delusions from the distorted fragments of frames that others have communicated to us, and that we ourselves develop. We have produced a highly complex and internally consistent toolkit of delusions: the aforementioned mental schemas, descriptions, predispositions. We project those delusions onto the real world, and we each traverse that universal terrain of phenomena according to what we infer from our personalized sets of delusions.

From this perspective, any sophisticated theory, be it the product of science or mathematics or philosophy, can only ever exist as an expression of the frames that emerge from shared-delusions, as a description. It is *not*, and can never be, the essence of the terrain itself. The imagined world of theory is always removed from the 'real world'; it is full of absurdities that must be ignored for the theory to be useful. The reason why not everyone is proficient in the intellectual disciplines of science may not be because of any fundamental deficiency on their part, but rather a superficial one, in that their personal maps are not, and may not be, designed in a particular

requisite way that is capable of denying the absurdities in the theory. We all have deficiencies in some respects, but the only question worth asking is about the appropriateness of our personal maps; whether our deficiencies limit our ability to operate in our own particular niche in the world, and whether there are more appropriate shared-delusions and frames to help us operate better.

Map as a Metaphor

In considering a frame, the linear and restricted form of a delusion, the authors are using the age-old concept of a map as their metaphor; but they will be ignoring the post-medieval fetish for geometrical accuracy. The map (the frame, or hypothesis, or filter, or metaphor, or whatever else we may wish to call it) must aid the synthesis of what is important, and represent/describe the situation in a way appropriate to tackling the tasks at hand. We can never explain anything; we merely describe convincingly. It is dealing with the world through metaphor 'as if' it is something else: a something we are more comfortable with. Observation and cognition then is self-reference in operation.

Anyone who has navigated the London Underground using a revision of Harry Beck's famous original map will know exactly what is meant. In Beck's design masterpiece distances are distorted, and relative positions of Tube stations on the map bear little relationship to above-ground compass bearings. Yet it has the utility of being far more meaningful than any geographically accurate map. So much so that its style has been copied all around the globe. Why? Because travellers in the subterranean world have realized that by restricting concepts of truth to the consistency of structures on the map, their journeys are made much easier. Just like Beck's design, each mental map is merely an evolving generality, the delusion that we impose on ourselves in order to move around the terrain.

However, we should never forget that 'all generalities are misleading, including this one'.⁶ Misleading? Yes and No! Let us reiterate: delusions are not nonsense. The sorcery of delusions is emancipating, because it creates a surreal view of the world where anything, within reason, is possible. Like in the Bugs Bunny cartoon, how often do we think that we have painted ourselves into a corner in some personal, business or social context? The corner is just a metaphor for inertia: that we have frozen, instead of choosing to fight or flee. Alternatively, we can decide that the room will not constrain us, and use our imagination to create a different room, a different situation.

Just like Bugs Bunny, we can overcome the inertia by painting a door on the wall, opening it and escaping. Our actions do not contradict the constraints of the old room, for by choosing from a different set of delusions we are in a different situation. Such sorcery is a convincing rhetoric that enables us to treat every situation in this opportunistic way, and it therefore promises huge scope for manoeuvre. What it doesn't do, however, is promise miracles; but as long as we don't contradict what is necessarily so, we are constrained only by the limits of our imagination.

Avoiding Sensory Overload

Imagination then projects these delusions, some as framed linear patterns, in a way that variously interprets the context in which we operate. For mankind is a pattern-making animal. Those patterns (both linear and non-linear, although we can only reflect on the linear) do not just exist in the brain, and not just in the individual's software. 'Every inquiry is seeking. Every seeking gets guided beforehand by what is sought' (Heidegger, 1962). There are patterns in every aspect of our reaction to the environment around us, including the genetically concocted hardware that separates our species from others. All the remainder of God's creatures and plants, humanly created artefacts too, are systemically disposed to project niche-appropriate patterns around them, only they aren't human patterns. This is the way dolphins, porpoises and bats use their own species-specific sonar (as we humans interpret it) to survive and prosper in their particular worlds. The particular human approach, the delusion of self-consciousness, does not make us superior to these other species, only different; although in one very important respect we are no different. A human, a cat, an amoeba, a worm, a tree, even a grain of rice, all have to respond to their environment with their own category/species-unique set of senses, via their predisposition to sense data (or not) in context, and thereby survive and prosper. Each species has to make its own way in the world, but differently, with different dispositions evolved to fit species-particular surroundings.

That human dispositions involve consciousness is just human peculiarity. A response to prevalent conditions does not have to do with thought: a fairly obvious conclusion in the case of the tree and rice grain. It is only human arrogance that places our rational thought above all the other ways and means of dealing with events in the world. After all, we breathe without thinking about it; the required patterns are constructed in human physiology. Thought is just one among our human pattern projection systems, although

we do tend to posit it at the centre of all things. Why are we surprised that our brain is so wonderful, when the brain itself is telling us this? Rational thought is not even a primary aspect of our own thinking.

The reason this book puts so much emphasis on delusions is because delusions are not a failure of rationality, quite the opposite. Delusions, and building on allusions, are primary. Rational thought came late into our picture, as a side-effect of our imagination, which itself has emerged out of the evolving complexity of pre-human delusions. At its core, rationality is nothing more than a self-referential system of both pre-cognition (that is the collection of individual delusions that construct the possibilities of various responses to external stimuli) and cognition (that is the application of pre-cognition to an event before what results from that application becomes internalized by the human observer and is fed back to support a re-application of the function of pre-cognition).

Thought is a delusion that contemplated itself into existence as the basis of action and communication, which is why we are self-aware, and don't merely think. In turn, that side-effect has convinced us that we sense the truth about things, and as intelligence, it tells us how to act on that constructed truth. This is what we humans do. Other species approach the world differently and in their own appropriate ways. Each species has its own way of delusion, is its own way of delusion. Whatever that way may be, it must result in *The Will to Power* (Nietzsche et al., 1968) for each species, because otherwise extinction beckons. What sublime irony, that the discoveries of the Human Genome Project, the ultimate arrogance of human intelligence, the very intelligence that distinguishes humanity, should lead us to realize that the DNA of humans is less complex than that of rice (Venter and Craig, 2001). 'Although humans are normally thought to be considerably more complex than organisms, such as plants, rice, yeast and earthworms, this is not reflected in their number of genes, with humans having less genes than other supposedly less complex organisms' (George, 2002).

Any creature that can avoid the deluge of data, and cope with the sensory overload, is obviously at an evolutionary advantage. We could just ignore all the noise around us; however, not only would we then miss out on the advantages out there, but also we would be oblivious of imminent danger. The trick is to cope by denying the apparent complexity in the 'real world' of phenomena, so as to maximize the benefits and minimize the hazards, by living in a tidy world previously mapped by carefully crafted delusions, both private and shared. The noise around us is not totally dispersed by a logical

reality, rather it is ignored by the delusion that the intellect is telling us the (whole) truth about things. However, it is worth reiterating that pattern matching is not only cerebral, but also a visceral interpretation by our whole being. It is just that awareness places thought, the means of that awareness, above everything else.

In the next chapter we will look at patterns in more detail, and then in Chapter 6 we will consider the implications of the absurdity of implying tidiness in the world, when that world is anything but tidy.