AN INFORMAL EXPLANATION OF
THE SCIENTIFIC BASIS AND SIGNIFICANCE OF
A *TAXONOMY OF HUMAN ELEMENTS IN ENDEAVOUR™* (THEE™)

Warren Kinston
kinston@thesigmacentre.com

ABSTRACT

A comprehensive and dynamic taxonomy of the human elements in endeavour, the 'Taxonomy', has been discovered through a wide variety of consulting projects and reviews of the literature in many fields. The Taxonomy has been identified using an 'idealist model of reality' rather than the usual 'realist model of reality' which has proved so fruitful in natural sciences. This approach leads to recognition of a transcendental realm which is apart from the personal world of private experience and the public world of psychosocial phenomena. Evidence from the actual world is essential but secondary to awareness of inner experience and reflective inquiry within the transcendental realm. Experience itself often seems mysterious, so a conception is proposed to clarify its ever-present but often unacknowledged reality. Scientific description and systematic study within the Taxonomy requires representations of experience which need to satisfy twin criteria—as well as being 'true' (veridical) they need to be 'true-to-life' (common-sense). Conviction as to the validity of the Taxonomy and its contents flows from the disciplined and critical application of a range of conventional scientific methods and criteria. The Taxonomy is valuable for consultants and academics for whom it is an ontology allowing for multiple doctrines and not requiring any shared global theory, while being capable of further development and improvement. For wider society generally, it offers the prospect of many powerful tools that permit problem minimization or resolution, relevant accurate predictions of social process, and effective speedy progress of complex social endeavours.

A Taxonomy has been Discovered

Many endeavours—businesses, relationships, campaigns, schools, you name it—fail miserably or struggle on inefficiently and unhappily. This has led to the emergence in recent decades of numerous cadres of consultants, advisors, counsellors and therapists of all sorts. Many give help by drawing on years of experience. Some are not really helpers at all but external service providers or even employee substitutes (i.e. doing work that should be done by permanent staff but at double the price). Brimming with confidence, some just shoot from the hip and no-one dares call them charlatans. Others, as they say, borrow your watch to tell you the time. Fads and their followers succeed each other with monotonous regularity—but just because an idea becomes a fad does not mean there is nothing in it.

Many helper-types apply genuine intellectual tools of various sorts—theories, principles, systems, models and frameworks. These tools are built with greater or lesser care and enjoy larger or smaller followings—although it would be rash to suggest that popularity has much relation to truth or worth. It is to this last group of consultants with a real feeling for the value and power of relevant practical knowledge that the present article is primarily directed.

Knowledge is used in the natural sciences to construct tools. It is surely reasonable to imagine there could be knowledge related to deliberate efforts that might itself be a tool or be used to create tools. Without a scientifically based tool-making approach, all that is left is a travesty of consulting, leaving it resembling anxiety-reducing dependency-engendering hand-holding at best and blatant dishonesty at worst. The idea that professional helpers need to work scientifically—that is to say use knowledge that is valid, reliable, communicable, improvable, and useful—is not new. But the concern for science in this field is not always evident, and the debate as to scientific status remains as intense as ever.

In my own work as a consultant to leaders and, before that, as a therapist to individuals and families, I found it essential to use systematic and codified knowledge. I read widely, drew on knowledge and theories developed by others, and conducted my own research. I noted that often the same topic was tackled in dramatically different ways: the competing schools in psychotherapy, for example, are legion. And something similar applied over and over again in many social domains. That intriguing finding of multiple competing schools of thought must surely reflect the great diversity amongst people, I conjectured. It certainly seems that different people are attracted to different doctrines.

To make sense of things and help clients effectively and efficiently manage doctrines and less salubrious nostrums competing for their attention, I found that I needed to develop my own frameworks in many areas. In doing that, I not only penetrated deeply into what the topics (like decision, purpose, management) were about, but also brought together observations of others who had devoted their life to extremely specific areas, like just one type of decision-making (say, rational planning), or just one form of intending (say, prioritizing), or just one aspect of manager assessment (say, capacity to handle complexity).

Over many years of study and application, I realized that such helpful frameworks were not only multiple and inter-linked, but their ramifications tended to resonate with each other. Eventually, I found that I had discovered, to my own amazement, that they could be unified in a strange and wonderful way. This forced me to postulate a root entity — which I thought was probably best called WILL.

It may be helpful to think of WILL as undifferentiated energy pushing for expression in forms of many sorts, each of which contains part of that primal unimaginable volitional energy. All those forms, it seems, can be coherently and consistently arranged and logically ordered within the Taxonomy.

The claim is barely credible: that a comprehensive dynamic Taxonomy able to cover all human elements in endeavor has been identified. However, it seems possible that it is so, and it is a thing of great beauty. Anyone interested in an account of the Taxonomy and its discovery, including basic technical details, and references to key texts is referred to a summary pamphlet.[§] Here, we will take the Taxonomy for granted and devote ourselves to some essential questions: What sort of knowledge is it? What is it knowledge of? Even if it is true in some sense, can it be called scientific?

[§] W. Kinston *There is a Periodic Table in the Mind: A Comprehensive Dynamic Taxonomy of the Human Elements in Endeavour*. The SIGMA Centre Ltd, 2000.

The Taxonomy is not a Product of Conventional Science

If we consider whether or not to classify the Taxonomy as scientific, then we must consider what we mean by science. Getting to the answer before the explanation, if the question means, was the Taxonomy created with the perspective of conventional scientific philosophy, then the answer is "no". If the question means was the Taxonomy created using conventional scientific methods suitable to its subject matter, then the answer is "yes".

Now to the explanation. Before proceeding, we must briefly review normal science. It is well to emphasize that, in so many ways, conventional science has delivered the goods. We should be grateful for that and understand better what it offers. But we, or at least those arbiters and stout defenders of conventional science, should also understand and be open and explicit about what realities a neutral approach cannot address constructively. In short, normal science avoids the reality of good and evil. But the world of the will *is* the world of good and evil. The world of good and evil cannot simply be brushed aside: it concerns us all and it must be addressed in a suitable way.

Where is the world of good and evil? It lies in our experiencing and actions flowing from that experiencing.

Modern conventional science espouses what philosophers would call a "realist model of reality". It takes the position (a) that there are things out there that have substance independent of ourselves; and (b) that lawful connections between these can be discovered; and (c) that, by using such laws, physical things or information bits can be manipulated with confidence to produce predictable results. While this view is challenged by speculations related to quantum physics, most scientists in practice—I refer to chemists, biologists, engineers, geologists and others—ignore quantum implications on a day-to-day basis. They do not assume that anyone's attitudes or observations create geological strata, or ocean currents, or radioactive decay, or chemical reactions. They firmly believe, or operate as if they firmly believe, that the laws relating to what they observe are independent of their own mental state. They apply those laws to things and create tools—and so we fly to the moon, build skyscrapers, genetically engineer insect-resistant crops, transplant hearts, make integrated circuits, and everything else we think of as technology. As someone trained as a scientist, I respect its successes and believe in its approach and philosophical model.

Social science has attempted to follow this realist model hoping for similar astounding successes. However, the desired success has proved elusive. It is not evident that we have made great progress in regard to eradicating war, lessening violence, abolishing slavery, improving government, strengthening intimate relationships, eliminating racism, or organizing work. Look at the vast transformations in performance of physical activities based on knowledge and tools: e.g. the sequence of foot, horse, train, car, planes; or the sequence of fingers, abacus, slide rule, calculator, computer. Such unequivocal progress is nowhere to be seen. Success has been rather marginal at best, with major changes for both good and ill more often due to convinced campaigning reformers. Many wonder what good social science delivers. It is not obvious where the hundreds of millions of research money poured into leadership studies, for example, has taken us. Do many think that bulky tomes on policy-making in government have

improved the performance of our politicians? Reinvention of the wheel continues unabated; and where there seems to be useful knowledge, it is often intensely contested or poorly applied. In mainstream social science research, human experience is typically seen as a disturbing disruptive factor to be excluded or controlled, rather than as the essence of the object to be studied.

Social and behavioral scientists revel in findings that show that human experience is faulty, that people neither know what they are doing nor why they are doing it. They see us all as governed by our genes, by our memes, by our habits, by innate biases, and by our delusions (often built around an exaggeration of our own ability and importance). This is, of course, often or even usually true. However, as soon as errors from such sources are known, the possibility exists that a person can become aware and exert some self-control. It is this possibility of freedom that we need to celebrate—and it is this potential for self-mastery that the Taxonomy reflects and potentially supports.

Although my initial qualification and research work was in neurophysiology and fully governed by a conventional scientific outlook, I moved into medicine and psychiatry, and then qualified as a psychoanalyst. Psychoanalysis exposed me to a reality, the realm of unconscious experience and dreams that seemed qualitatively distinct. What I observed during that work did not fit the schema used by natural science or aped by social science. I believe that a critical element in the reorientation was the requirement that I help and heal the patient via my observations. This helping or healing element does not exist between the conventional scientist and his object of study.

The Taxonomy is a Scientific Product of an Alternative Philosophical Model

In addressing human experience, you do not need quantum theory to assert that things in the social world are *not* "just out there". Nothing is "out there" unless it starts "in here". You do not need to be a psychoanalyst to recognize that there is a different world "inside" to "outside" and that according to what is inside, certain things outside are modified or made to happen or are avoided. Looking around more widely at personal, social and organizational phenomena, it is evident to all—except perhaps to those who refuse to see—that when dealing with inner experience, things are different.

A friendship does not occur unless it is envisaged and wanted by two people. An organization would not exist unless many people enable it. A plan would not exist unless someone devised it. Concerts would not be attended unless some enjoyed performing and others enjoyed listening. Nothing exists in our human social world unless people have a notion of it, and deliberately bring it into existence. Usually, they get involved with it and play a part in its continuing existence. In other words, the reality to be studied is humanly created and sustained. These examples reveal that experiential entities exist both inside the person and also exist in the actual world as psychosocial phenomena. Sometimes the psychosocial phenomena take on a life of their own involving others. In other words, they look very much like objective quasi-natural entities. Indeed social phenomena like wars, racism, or businesses become impersonal entities similar to material objects that get us in their grip as firmly as gravity and the weather seem to—and also lead investigators into a misunderstanding of their non-human tangibility.

The will and the imagination are obviously in operation in the experiential world. Social reality draws on human intention, on the will and willingness, and on the imagination, and on much else — but all that 'much else' is utterly unlike physical things. It is largely irrelevant that experiential processes and mental states are mediated via neurochemicals or neuronal circuits, just as it is irrelevant that enjoyed music can be analyzed as vibrations of air molecules. The musical experience and the movements of air molecules belong in different worlds. So they need different modes of study.

It is surely not too difficult to accept that the world of experience and intention requires its own philosophy of observation. The appropriate philosophy is known as the "idealist model of reality". In this approach, everything in the world to be observed, that is all the recognizable entities in that world, are regarded as existing in a transcendental realm where they can be discovered and described in a perfect, pure and unequivocal state using our capacity to be aware and think. If we want to study and give accounts of experiential entities then we need to reflect on our experience, carry out imaginative or empathic exercises, and conduct inquiries within this transcendental realm.

Pure entities can be actualized more or less accurately and successfully either as particular private experiences or as public psychosocial realities where their impact can subsequently be seen. In regard to endeavour, of course, the whole idea is to alter the actual world out there according to what we desire and envisage internally. So both dimensions are required: a purpose, for example, needs to be genuinely held and felt internally if a person is to pursue it and at the same time it needs to exist as a social reality, stated and often written down, to be understood and used by others who are also involved. It follows that an observer can grasp the intentional-experiential realm through careful observations of psychosocial realities as well as via reflective inquiry.

The transcendental realm is a realm of possibility, which can be seen as underlying (or overlying) actual inner experiences and actual psychosocial events and structures. A feedback loop exists but the primary direction is unambiguous: from inner to outer, from potential to actual, from self to social. (Influence or power, however, flows sometimes one way and sometimes the other.)

The actual world, which we ourselves and our experiences are part of, contains exemplifications of transcendental possibilities, not the pure entities themselves. When we objectively investigate transcendental examples of entities (or entity-complexes) in the wider world, we will discover slightly different things depending on the times (e.g. friendship looked different in Ancient Greece than it does today), on culture (fair legal practice looks different in Britain and in France), on the type of human system considered (e.g. authority within a business differs from authority within a community), on the industry sector (e.g. marketing steel is different from marketing investments), on our biases or goals (e.g. inquiries by a trade union and by an academic will differ), on our ideologies (e.g. the notion of reform seems different to conservatives and liberals), on circumstances (e.g. businesses operate differently in the midst of a financial crisis), on fashions, and on many other factors.

In short, exemplifications are inevitably "conditioned" to a greater or lesser extent. We are immersed in our times and in our cultures, and it can be extra-ordinarily difficult to even notice, much less fully appreciate, powerful conditioning factors or their effects.

Sometimes conditioning is so intense that the exemplifications emerge in a messy and contestable state such that it can be hard to know what is being talked about or even whether something exists. Fortunately, conditioning is sometimes minimal, and sometimes observations across a variety of conditions reveal what is common without much difficulty.

In any case, from a scientific perspective, what we want is clarity about "unconditioned" experiential entities and their properties as can exist only within a transcendental realm. It is not too different from mathematics: π or e or γ can only be expressed precisely in the transcendental mathematical realm, and never via an actual length of line on a piece of paper or a number printed out by a computer—only approximations are possible in the actual world.

It is essential to recognize that real world exemplifications do give important and useful information as to the transcendental entities which they exemplify and reveal. Without them, it would be difficult to know that certain entities existed at all because they operate mainly unconsciously within individuals. We must not forget that we wish to study these entities in order to appreciate and channel their impact on actual situations. Real-world differences consequent on conditioning do not matter too much as long as observers do not accord scientific primacy to external reality. If they do, then the enmeshed state of entities in their environments may cause needless disputes. People end up arguing about contingent factors rather than seeing and communicating the essence of their concern.

However, this means it is necessary to admit the potential for bias by one's exposure to exemplifications, and to seek to remove bias through breadth of exploration (as well as depth). In short, in studies of the world of endeavour, concrete evidence is vital but has to be handled with care. The danger of being trapped by apparent facts based on imperfect historically-conditioned exemplifications is ever-present.

My proposition is that scientific debate and scientific knowledge-development in regard to WILL and its manifestations should take place primarily in the human experiential and transcendental realms with actualities providing ideas and evidence. It is noteworthy that those who concentrate on the empirical world for their psychological theories often end up speculating about animate and inanimate phenomena which ought to lie well outside their concerns, often including metaphysical speculations like whether insects feel or rocks think. Reflective inquiry and common-sense as well as many usual scientific methods are the tools in scientific work regarding experiential aspects of endeavour and tools for assisting endeavour. The Taxonomy, being itself reflective, provides for this work, and also provides for articulation of actualization processes—that is to say for the transition from transcendental reality to actual exemplification.

Idealist models in philosophy get their authors in trouble because they tend to posit an originating entity, typically called the "Will" which causes everything to exist, including physical reality. This causes no trouble to our investigations because we do not intend to offer any conjectures or observations about physical reality or its origins. And there is no embarrassment or mysticism at all in suggesting that the originating entity/energy for endeavour might be named WILL. The will is typically viewed philosophically and

theologically as the source of good and evil and as having as its objects 'good' and 'evil'. Yes! We are indeed in the world we wish to study scientifically.

So: unlike natural scientists, we are dealing with things that people create for better or worse, that people continually energize for better or worse, and that are affected by inner experiences for better or worse. It follows, then, that this world might well have distinctive properties from the natural neutral world that originated and persists independently of us and our interests, and that will continue to exist and evolve in its own way even if every human being perishes.

Let us review where we have reached: the will within people manifests as experiences of all sorts. I include in experience: not just quasi-elements like sensations, thoughts, purposes, words, images, intuitions, wishes, and identifications, but also any and all other complex and sometimes rather mysterious felt states like compromise, inspiration, obligation, knowing, synthesizing, patience, becoming, caring, entitlement, initiating, measuring, integrity, maintaining, imposition, programming, ecstasy, tactic, violence, codification, participation, self-reliance, debate, explanation and on and on and on and on. All these felt states are governed by transcendental entities in the same way that moving billiard balls are governed by the laws of motion, or language is governed by deep grammar. The laws of motion do not take you anywhere and grammar writes no books — but their value and usefulness is not doubted. If we can determine the precise nature of the transcendental entities which shape and form experience and thence psychosocial realities, we can hope to intervene and assist people with intellectual tools and technologies in a way that makes good sense all round.

But What is Experience Anyway?

In using the notion of an idea to explain experience as we did above—i.e. the idea of the project is *in my mind*, and the end result is *out in the world*—I simplified. But because experience is so ignored in existing sciences, both social and natural, and so misunderstood, it is necessary to get its nature out into the open. After all, forms related to experience are what are being codified within the Taxonomy.

Experience is actually rather ambiguous. As noted earlier, experience within endeavour often seems to be simultaneously internal and external; and psychodynamic investigators discovered long ago that many purely personal experiences are to be found outside the person, having been projected unconsciously into objects of various sorts. Think now of the experience of compromise. Can you have that experience without actually compromising, or anticipating compromising in a coming situation, or thinking of a previous situation where you compromised or where someone you knew well was compromising? Is compromise actually happening in the social interactions? Or is it happening in the thinking? Or at the moment of decision? Is the experience happening in the person or in the relationship? The arguments here could get quite complex and perhaps with no useful resolution. In accord with the principle that there is nothing wrong with living with ambiguity and it is actually unavoidable anyway, let us resolve to adopt a principle: we are not philosophers and we only need to clarify ambiguity when there is an obvious practical need and genuine benefit in doing so.

Having said that, it is surely necessary to know what we are talking about when we refer to experience. The Taxonomy flowed from the view that experience must be precisely and systematically referred to and incorporated when inquiring so as to help people in social situations. The other assumed obligation during inquiry was that no account should tell people how to be or how to see the world. So let us try to clarify matters in this section.

The human elements in endeavour, the subject of the Taxonomy, are indeed human experiences. Often they are referred to collectively as 'consciousness'—but this term might be best kept for the awareness of experience. When we access experience and deliberately or unconsciously manipulate it, for example during thinking or day-dreaming, we envisage a place called 'mind' and a mechanism called 'using your mind'. 'Feelings' is also a synonym for experience, but as it is sometimes thought of as emotion, which is a particular sort of experience, I will generally stick with the label 'experience'. For verbs, we can use: "I feel.....", "I experience.....", and "I sense…".

The first thing to assert is that ●experience actually exists and is irreducible to anything else. ●It is a continuous inner process of human beings, and perhaps all living systems. Because experience actually exists, it can be ●referred to directly ('what I am feeling now'), ●represented symbolically (e.g. in painting, music, sculpture, novels) and ●labeled using specific terms (words, which are often called 'concepts'). Words, carefully used, are the sine qua non for a scientific approach because without them we cannot think or communicate clearly.

Let us continue: ●Experience is fluid, changing from moment to moment, malleable, complicated, subtle, and endlessly differentiable. ●Experience is capable of endless further interpretation or elaboration, so circumscribing anything seems impossible. ●Experience is based in the first person, involves meaning and seems to provide significance to life. ●Experience cannot be measured by a machine but requires human sensitivity and empathy to be noted and valued. However, ●experience is not the same for the spontaneous participant and the independent observer or consultant and any on-going experience strangely alters in the process of being articulated and investigated. These unique features of experience are precisely what upset conventional scientists and what conventional scientific method attempts to remove—not realizing that this tactic simultaneously removes or destroys the essence of their object of study.

But none of these qualities of experience is a reason for us to throw up our hands. Just the reverse. Being able to make such a description—most of which I trust the reader instantly recognized—is itself evidence through consensus that we are referring to something real and part of the natural world. *Experience is a substantial phenomenon, as solid in its own way as a lump of granite—it is not an abstraction or a concept.* In that regard, it is just like the physical world. Like the physical world, experience is extraordinarily varied and massive; and only a very small part can be focused on or given attention at any time; and of that small part, only a small fraction is ever articulated—most remains implicit or hidden.

Human experience is self-generated. It emerges through our interaction with the world—that is to say through perception and action—but it is of course part of the world and also operates on itself. The Taxonomy's experiential fundamentals seem to

be: sensation, image, emotion, idea, intuition, identification and imagination; and then there are combinations of these. We do not need to go into details of this framework, but it is important in this article to recognize what I would call 'felt states' (or even just 'feelings'). These are complex inner experiences that we would feel uncomfortable categorizing in a simple way. Every name in the Taxonomy, e.g. 'compromise' or 'virtue' or 'priority' or 'procedure' or 'persuasion' or 'pragmatic action' or 'perspective-centredness' or 'principle' categorizes an actually or potentially meaningful felt state. This category-name refers to the pure timeless unchanging form or entity that exists within the transcendental realm. The category-entity is not itself an experience, though of course we must access it through experience, especially in the form of ideas. However, the entity's function and its position in the relevant transpersonal frameworks govern how that felt state manifests, and how such felt states are influenced personally and/or in psychosocial reality.

Having explained what experience is and how it should be recognized, it is as well to say something about the *expression* and *representation* of experience, especially in everyday life. Symbolization is the gene-based mental mechanism for the outer expression of experiences using what are called 'symbols'. Symbols may be sounds, marks, words, actions, situations — almost anything. The symbol marks off and specifies a feeling, often with the aim of making us (or helping us) give it attention, and perhaps appreciate it further. Symbols may refer directly to experience (e.g. which is the function of many words in natural language), may represent experience (e.g. as drama attempts) or may creatively form new experiences (e.g. as artistic works often do). Words allow reflection and rational inquiry. However, words used strictly as names, that is to say as quasi-formulae in the Taxonomy, become signs and lose some flexibility. Experiencing is certainly incomplete without symbols, and somewhat incomplete without words. Even then, it is still possible to refer to a felt state *directly* as in "I sense something is missing in this situation, but I cannot put my finger on it."

We should mention 'meaning'. Meaning is felt, so it is a special type of experience within the experiential world. It emerges in the interaction between a particular experience and symbols of some sort. Feedback from meaning to original experience can alter that experience. So meaning is created when the 'something missing' noted at the end of the previous paragraph links to symbols explaining where the finger should be put. In regard to an experience, as well as talking about felt meaning, there is also logical meaning. The latter contains experiences which exist by implication and deduction or which result due to criteria of consistency and coherence that often apply in the inner world.

As indicated above, felt states related to forms in the Taxonomy have to sit within a web of meaning if they are to be useable. Otherwise the question is asked: "but what do you mean by (say) perspective-centredness?" The functional definition, properties and relationships of the forms provide a full answer to such questions. However, if the area of endeavour is well outside the ambit of the questioner, so many associated experiences will be missing that the answer may not be particularly satisfactory

As already explained, experiences can be referred to directly and can be recognized in oneself and others. However, where "something is missing", it is possible to help an experience develop in various ways. For example, by *explication* (as is occurring in this

article), through *metaphor* (e.g. when the phrase 'putting my finger on it' evokes the notion of getting a clear sense), by *illustration* (as when telling stories), by *exemplifications* (as in reference to known situations) and by *contextualization* (i.e. by creating a certain environment of experiences which somehow generates meaning).

Does the Taxonomy contain all experience? Of course not—experience is infinite. The Taxonomy concerns itself with endeavour and it categorizes from the perspective of endeavour—not experience generally. The Taxonomy must organize a large but almost certainly limited number of categories. Given the nature of experience, we can say that within just one category, the variety of experiences which exemplify that category would be near limitless. (This is because the particular experience corresponding to, say, the category of 'priority' will be different in every single case due to context effects; and when many are dealing with the same case, each person's distinctive perspective and associations would alter their inner experience of priority somewhat.)

In representing experience in the Taxonomy, two questions must always be asked over and over again. "Is it true to life?" and "is it true?". The first question relates to the common-sense criterion used by the Taxonomy. It asks what is the relation of the representation of the experience (i.e. by the name or by properties or relations) to the experience as potentially felt or imagined by any inquirer, and by extension, by any person. All transcendental entities have to be true to life to be useful in practical situations. Any terms naming those entities that are not meaningful (or whose meanings are distorted by unexpected associations) are difficult to use or even usable. In the Taxonomy, each cell has a logically meaningful formula (a string of letters and numbers which feel incomprehensible) and also a very carefully chosen formal name (which seeks to be quasi-perfect in both logical and feeling terms). However, in consulting work, these perfect formal names often do not suit at all. So alternative names are substituted, names which are more acceptable and evocative, that is to say more true-to-life for that particular client.

The second question relates to our criteria as to what counts formally as truth i.e. epistemological criteria. Here the relevant issue is veridicality or correspondence with the facts (i.e. rigorously examining the true-to-life question), and also the logical adequacy of propositions and assertions.

Given the hostility of social science to experience and the sense of radical breakthrough combined with probable career damage for any social scientist that enters these waters, faulty concepts abound. Concepts may be faulty because they are defined either in a discipline-generated limited way or invented creatively in a private fashion, perhaps to enable use of measuring instruments so crucial to academic or consulting success. Live experience ends up being cramped and twisted, or turned into dead abstractions. The responder-interviewee exposed to them desperately experiences a sense of inappropriateness and artificiality in concept-related questions while trying to reply helpfully and be soothed by nostrums like «please remember there is no right answer». So the true-to-life criterion is often profoundly violated. Alternatively, concepts are used that take the form of undefined notions that connote widely and privately rather than denoting in a logical, public, limited fashion. Such concepts (usually nice things like courage rather than uninspiring ones like punctuality) contain and generate many felt meanings, which

then proliferate out of control, changing from moment to moment or sentence to sentence in a way that is logically indefensible and practically unmanageable.

The Taxonomy seeks to avoid these twin dangers. Given that we now have a clearer conception of what 'it' is, we can now turn to consider the 'is it true?' question.

Methods for Studying Endeavour and Gaining Conviction

Studying the experiential and created world as if it were identical in nature to the physical world has been rejected on the grounds that inquiries must suit the nature of what is being investigated. However, although the methods to acquire information are different, a number of methods to gain conviction turn out to be rather similar.

The methods for acquiring information about the human elements in endeavour involve gaining awareness of experiential entities and psycho-social entities of all sorts within the area of interest, and then noting the functions served by these and determining other properties and relationships. Awareness, reflection, conversation and openness to the experiences of others are the key tools for inquirers.

Engaging with people, especially during attempts to assist them and understand what they were thinking and doing (and what they found difficult to think or experience or do) is a fundamental method. The inquirer needs a normal easy conversation allowing freely flowing accounts of experiences and reports of consequences of actions. This gives some confidence that artificial generation of thoughts and feelings has not occurred—for example, to please the consultant-interviewer or as self-gratification. To commune with people, a basic level of trust and confidentiality in the relationship is required. It is amazing how easily that can be generated if the willingness to allow it exists. People usually enjoy talking about themselves and their work, and even painful issues. With a little experience, a consultant can easily recognize phony conversations. As a rule, when anyone communicates about something important to him, he reveals himself one way or another. Short of deliberate deception or shutting off, it is almost impossible not to do so. The depth and breadth of that revelation will vary according to his purposes, his communicative capacities and his inner sophistication.

It should go without saying that the great humanists and social scientists have revealed fundamental truths about endeavours and their products, which need to be appreciated and appropriately incorporated. Another wonderful written source are books written by reflective practitioners whose life has been devoted to a particular type of activity (e.g. negotiating) or particular way of thinking (e.g. experimenting) or living (e.g. being a politician). From many such people, a truly deep understanding can be obtained and much can be learned from their insights.

Endeavour covers such a vast field that it is necessary to divide it up and analyze small sections, much as in natural science. A key decision-issue for inquirers is precisely how to make that division. A good division will produce rapid useful results and a poor division produces fruitless puzzles and wastes time. As an example, studying leadership never looked promising to me. In the event it turns up all over the place within the Taxonomy almost as epiphenomena: i.e. get everything else right and leadership seems to sort itself out. However, inquiry itself, my first object of study, turned out to be extremely easy and fruitful, especially given that many thinkers have

done so much work over the last few centuries and have provided illuminating debates and overviews more recently. There proved to be quite a close link between inquiring and deciding, a link which emerged precisely because Taxonomy-related inquiry has a distinctive usefulness orientation. As well as opportunity, client-work plays a part in choice of topic to study, so theories of psychotherapy were natural well-defined objects of interest from an early stage.

I have emphasized the value of the criteria of common-sense and simplicity in dealing with experiential endeavour elements. If any simple entity about everyday working, organizing or managing cannot be explained in an easy natural fashion, then it is unlikely that anything more complicated based on it will ever make much sense. Conversing genuinely about important entities with practitioners, which is such an important tool for grappling with what anything is about, becomes difficult or even impossible if an abstruse over-clever invented word or jargon-filled proposition is introduced. So neologisms, invented terms, should be avoided. New technologies and new social forms do produce new experiences and new relationships related to endeavour, but people have been deliberately doing things since the emergence of *homo sapiens* and anything new is likely to be an adaptation or new exemplification of some existing category rather than some fundamentally new entity.

A useful heuristic is to accept that any person speaking to you *about their own work* knows what they are talking about i.e. they speak from experience and from a particular perspective which deserves respect, recognition and scientific incorporation (even if we politely accept with reservations any abstract claims or generalizations they may choose to make).

Any scientific instrument that tries to control personal experience or freedom of action tends, by definition, to be inappropriate. So randomized control trials and many common rating tools are problematic. The more unfettered the person is, the more valid and reliable measurement is. An example of an appropriate measurement tool is the Visual Analogue Scale, where a person refers to an inner experience (e.g. anxiety, breathlessness) and marks on a 10cm line how intense it is, using as reference points 0 for zero intensity and 100 for maximum conceivable intensity.

The Taxonomy contains a limited number of forms. These include various types of hierarchy, characteristic spirals determining staged growth in values, various types of dualities and their resolution. All these forms are interlinked in sometimes unusual ways. Like the watch found on the beach, it is hard to believe that its links and inner workings are happenstance or arbitrary. While particular examples of some of the structures existed already in a variety of literatures, the full inter-related details of the major forms and overall structure were neither obvious, nor expected, nor predictable. From an elevated abstract perspective, the Taxonomy commends itself through its elegance, simplicity and beauty.

However, to recognize and confirm entities, to construct constituent frameworks, and to proceed to perceive the grand unification as a Taxonomy, a variety of scientific principles and scientific methods have been used. Perhaps more important than any method is the correct attitude, which is one of reasonable skepticism and openness to constructive criticism from any direction. Given the fluidity and contestability of

experience and the human tendency to see patterns in randomness, almost any entity and any pattern of entities can seem rather convincing. So, unless one generates alternative conjectures, engages in devils' advocacy, and pursues active continuous criticism from many angles, many people and many perspectives, satisfaction with something rather sub-optimal or even grossly inadequate, is only too likely.

Putting aside methods used by those whose knowledge I abstracted, here are some of the more important scientific methods and principles that I found myself depending upon during discovery of the various frameworks and construction of their linkages.

a) *Scrupulous categorization and naming.* Every elemental entity has a function, properties and relationships; and so do complex elements like frameworks with dynamic inner structures. So the greatest care must be taken in determining entity details. In doing so, as well as being critical and skeptical, it is essential to be coherent and to be consistent, to be precise and clear. Throw these scientific criteria out the window and almost anything can be asserted about anything.

b) *Structural corroboration and fruitfulness*. The structural integrity of the Taxonomy is positive scientific evidence for its validity. Some links in its complicated system of systems are logically entailed, but many were empirically found and could not have been predicted a priori by existing or simple rules. Given such structural complexity, a rather small error can create confusions, tensions (incoherence or inconsistency) and blockages. In the same vein, correctness (veridicality) generates clarity and conviction leading to further discoveries and applications. The structure lacks artificiality and yet some of the inter-relations between forms are surprising. The fertility and practical applicability of taxonomic forms are suggestive of validity.

c) *Piecemeal clarity and improvement.* In a *system* of elements as distinct from a *list* of elements, any error ramifies rapidly and, if not corrected, starts a disintegrating process which may proceed to invalidate much or all of the whole. So knowledge about the smallest experiential entity needs to be developed essentially independently of knowledge of every other entity. If very small pieces can be understood and later, sometimes many years later, shown to fit together, this offers some evidence that each exists as well as that they belong together. From small elements-systems that seem correct, bigger elements-systems can be constructed with some reasonable conviction.

d) *Management of bias.* To discover, it is essential to be dispassionate and not to pre-judge or pre-order findings to suit personal preferences or a priori assumptions. In the world of experience, biases often take the form of loyalty to particular ways of thinking (socialization, theories, doctrines, paradigms) and rejection or devaluation of others. To control for such effects, explicit self-awareness and active engagement of other people (i.e. other perspectives) is essential. Enough has already been said earlier about conditioning biases: this type of bias needs to be handled by an inclusive broadening approach to the objects of study, rather than the usual strategy to gain control and certainty by narrowing focus.

e) *Independent identification as validation*. Frequent independent identification is regularly used to select and determine elements in the Taxonomy because it is reasonable evidence of the existence of certain endeavour phenomena. . In normal science, inquirers are not independent of each other—they communicate and criticize

each other as they strive to reach agreement. So when varied people in different human systems and/or in different social sectors and/or in different professional disciplines and/or at different historical periods offer recognition of similar (but not necessarily precisely identical) entities or relationships, the result is not consensus in the usual scientific sense. (Because criticism of taxonomic propositions is possible, scientific consensus can, however, be developed for its entities.)

    f)   *Successful prediction as validation.* At the framework level, it should be possible, and is indeed possible, to predict the consequences of actions or arrangements depending on whether what is done accords (or not) with principles or relationships postulated within the framework. Within the Taxonomy as a whole, it has been possible to predict the existence and broad nature of not just undiscovered small entities which are little more than fragments, but also large complicated frameworks which turn out to be of great practical value.

Client Validation. As well as the above scientifically-oriented reasons for accepting knowledge as potentially valid (yet subject to further improvement), there is also the evidence from clients. The repeated use of particular name-entities or relationships or tools emerging from the Taxonomy with clients who show ready acceptance, understanding and application offers some comfort—even if not what most would regard as strict proof. If application of a Taxonomy-generated tool is followed by genuine predicted outcomes and benefits within the client's endeavours, then that is an indication that something genuine may be at work.

There is another unusual reason for conviction that is particularly relevant in the experiential realm and for consultants. It is the illumination resulting from clarification of a troubling issue. This experience of illumination suggests and leads to personal validation. As a client once said: "You cannot see it until you see it, and then you cannot not see it." (The typical academic, never having experienced a *Eureka* moment and trained to doubt any *aha!* response, responds differently: "It's just too neat!")

Explaining Numbers. The presence of fixed numbers of things, especially levels in a hierarchy, has often caused debate and doubt in skeptical readers; and so deserves a brief mention here. The Taxonomy provides explanations of numbers of things, and it usually does much more by giving unexpected useful information about items within the set and about the set itself. Although the Taxonomy is heavily oriented to sets of 7, it also contains sets of 1's, 2's, 3's, 4's, 5's, 6's, 10's, and various higher numbers as well (e.g. 22s and 28s).

Empirical observations by consultants and social scientists frequently generate unstructured (or minimally structured) lists nothing like the above the sets. My list of methods (a) to (f) above is such a list. When the listing makes no theoretical claims or claims as to comprehensiveness, then it does not matter. And when, say, 31 types of something (like sales techniques) are identified, we can dismiss that as unmemorable; and no one, not least the author, worries too much whether it should be 32 or 35 types.

However, when great pomp surrounds the statement that 3 types of something are found (e.g. in managerial work), or a set of 4 varieties is postulated for something else (e.g. leadership traits), then we need to ask more persistently why 3 rather than 4 or 5?

Why 4 rather than 6 or 7? The point I am making here is simple: *A list has no intrinsic validity in a system or structure.* Certain things do just exist: we have 2 arms not 4 which might be far more convenient. However, if a structure or system only contains a certain number of elements, then there should (ideally) be some sort of logic behind this, some sort of reason or supportive explanation inherent in the nature of the structure (which is itself an entity) which explains why there *cannot* or *should not* be fewer or more entities. In our human body example, we might compare our skeletal structure with that of related animals. However, explanations are not usually provided by list-makers—the number is simply what feels right, or it is all that came to the researcher's mind at the time. However, sometimes, if the observer is reflective and careful, their number of elements is indeed correct—at least according to the Taxonomy.

Let me now pull together the principal assumptions, arguments, and propositions described in this article:

A. There is an experiential realm which is apart from the actual social world but which interacts with it so as to change the latter for human benefit. This realm provides the distinctively human element to endeavour. The experiential realm is governed by and provides access to power-full entities which exist in a separate transcendental realm.

B. Human will and purpose drive and direct endeavour individually and collectively so as to maintain and change the actual social world that people inhabit. Goodwill and goodness, the root source of the potential and desire for benefit, emerge from will and purpose. Destructiveness and evil may also emerge.

C. It is possible to obtain valid useful knowledge of how the will and its numerous emanating entities (forms, structures, processes) develop and function in the transcendental realm. This knowledge clarifies how transcendental entities manifest when experienced and when actualized in the world.

D. All human elements intrinsic to the many processes and structures of endeavour can be located in a Taxonomy, much of whose structure (but not nearly all contents) has been clarified. The *Taxonomy of Human Elements in Endeavour* (acronym: THEE™) contains itself and its own discovery process.

E. The human elements in endeavour are both experienced privately or subjectively and communicated or manifested and experienced publicly. In developing clarity about these phenomena, reflective inquiry based on awareness is the primary tool, while evidence from exemplification is crucial but may not be determining.

F. Once knowledge is captured within the Taxonomy, it can be used to create tools and introduce social designs and technologies for managing and organizing which accord with human nature, including accommodating its diversity, while fitting the wider social and physical environment.

We will return once again to the philosophical nature and practical potential of the Taxonomy to conclude the article.

Scientific Knowledge is Necessary to Create Powerful Tools

The will operates in everyone automatically. Loss of will is death or near-death as found in a persistent vegetative state or in a severely deteriorated neglected chronic schizophrenic. People, being driven from within, spontaneously find their way by trial and error into activities and challenges which they can meet naturally or when stretched. Where possible, they generally avoid challenges that are far too much for them. This allows for progress and problems to be handled quasi-automatically and intuitively, helped by a dose of imitation, unself-conscious inquiry and social conformity. By and large, interfering with natural processes of consciousness and conformity is disruptive—imagine if you tried to converse in an unknown language only with reference to a dictionary and grammar book.

However, over the past century endeavours have become increasingly complex and ambitious. With many diverse people involved in such projects, automatic or intuitive function does not suffice and there is no template to imitate. Evolution does not seem to have provided the natural awareness and self-mastery that we require for what we now want to do. So governments, organizations and people mess things up and projects go wrong all the time. Simple inquiry often reveals that structures and processes do not align with human nature, with social realities, with upheld values or even with explicitly desired outcomes. The mistakes, shambles and waste are often so gross, even grotesque, that they strain belief. It follows that we feel we really must interfere in the natural processes of consciousness despite the difficulty. As a result, there are whole industries engaged in teaching and helping people to organize and manage, to service clients and to increase profitability, to develop communities and even whole countries, to grow personally and relate better, and much else of this sort. Possibly because failure makes people more amenable to learning, to taking advice, and to reflecting on their own mode of operation, help is often requested after things have gone badly wrong, rather than used in advance to ensure complex endeavours are handled correctly.

Consultants believe they can help create better states of affairs that improve results, that avoid errors, that reduce destructiveness, that release human potential for something better. These ideals require far more than the neutral collection and analysis of information. It seems certain that many consultants and therapists can and do improve matters for clients using highly specialized knowledge in the form of doctrines, models, principles and other intellectual devices. Unfortunately, the results are patchy. Issues of validation, reliability, improvement, extension and prediction have taken second place to having something that seems to convince and work right now with the client. Artificial or even alienating measurement tools have masqueraded as psychometric sophistication. Much useful knowledge has been divided and distributed almost haphazardly so that the consultant ends up possessing a high-quality hammer—and every client looks like a nail. The larger consultancies often avoid controversy by offering to install 'best practice': in short, they offer social conformity writ large. Overall, it seems that basic common-sense and logic are not always applied when money, reputation or beliefs are at stake.

When considering the theoretical foundations of consultant knowledge, the picture seems to be one of charisma (i.e. power) rather than wisdom (i.e. virtue) carrying the day. Ideological in-fighting or co-existence without mutual recognition occurs within

established academic institutions. We also see increasingly a range of non-academic institutes offering training and even certification in their self-defined-superior founder-inspired doctrine. There are also exclusive purity-seeking sect-like orthodoxies, often with world-changing aspirations.

The Taxonomy is not a doctrine or paradigm. Philosophically, the Taxonomy can be characterized as an ontology: that is to say, it is an explicit formal specification of how to represent everything that exists in a particular area of interest including the relationships that hold among those things. So the Taxonomy explicitly contains room for many conflicting theories, paradigms, doctrines, models, frameworks, principles and so on—as long as they are related to endeavour. People who share the same ontology, *if they so choose*, are enabled to communicate easily with each other about their own work and *without needing to accept any globally shared theory*. Effective consultants with useful doctrines are, in effect, ontologically-committed to the Taxonomy without knowing it, insofar as their observable actions and statements are consistent with definitions, properties and relations contained within the Taxonomy.

We are born to live—but we are not born with the *means* or *knowledge* to sustain ourselves or to create a good life. To gain knowledge we have to use our mind: so *use of our mind is fundamental to human liberty, prosperity and all we hold dear*. To enhance our means we have to develop tools. *Tools are therefore fundamental to human liberty, prosperity and all we hold dear.* The better our knowledge and our tools, the more we can create what is of value to us.

Physical tools and complex technologies based on natural science have been developed to channel and strengthen manipulation of atoms, physical energy and information bits with almost unbelievable success. But, to date, tools for the mind to use on itself and its products, numerous as they are, have not been systematically organized, well grounded and formally developed. The Taxonomy, being a scientific account of human experience relevant to endeavour, provides tools and an organization of tools guiding their use, and also master-tools that can be used to make more complex tools. Every cell-entity in the taxonomy emerges from WILL and has a function, that is to say it is itself a power-tool and its properties and relationships are the equivalent to a user manual. The intrinsic aim when these tools are well-used is to sensibly channel and strengthen natural mental, emotional, spiritual, interpersonal, and social processes in particular situations of importance to us.

Many consulting projects are evidence that the speed with which human-nature-aligned technologies can resolve problems and expedite progress is absolutely amazing. In any endeavour, *speed is power*. Natural speed cuts down on resources used and wasted, reduces frustration doubt and uncertainty, and minimizes demands for patience and virtue. Power-tools in the human realm could liberate us in surprising ways and could generate not just prosperity, but unimaginable success for our endeavours in many dimensions.

The tools in the Taxonomy are common-sense and therefore naturally used and accessible by everyman. So the intention is that anyone should have easy access via the Internet to whatever tools they deem relevant to use in whatever way they choose. Specialist consultants need to go further and become taxonomically aware. They should

be using the Taxonomy to develop more and better practical intellectual technologies, often using the latest computing assistance. Specialist reflective inquirers with great dedication and a certain mental style need to emerge. Using developer-guidelines and scientific rules that have proved their worth, they will be able to engage with elaboration and improvement of the impersonal structural fundamentals.

Taxonomic technologies do not appear by magic and nor do the tools work by pushing a button. They are undevelopable, undiscoverable and unusable if there is a reluctance to learn, to reflect, to be advised; or if personal desires for belonging and safety or for self-aggrandizement and control replace desires to grow personally and generate benefit for others. Without autonomy, responsibility and reasonable reflection, no tool or technology (physical or experiential) can be used well and do its job effectively. Simple tools and complicated intellectual technologies alike are not recipes—each is more like an Internet browser. The browser enables use of the amazing wealth of resources on the Internet, but it does not select good sites for you or ensure that your browsing is efficient or productive. So technologies for particular uses—whether to help you assist creativity, to increase profitability, to build a community, to organize managerial accountability, or to change a dysfunctional culture—still leave the user in charge and working at it.

So there we have it. The *Taxonomy of the Human Elements in Endeavour* (THEE) resolves the present fragmented and unsatisfactory situation in consulting to human systems of all sorts and can assist participants, organizations and, indeed, any human system to function more powerfully through the release of natural potential. Harmful aspects of the consulting professions could be mitigated and beneficial aspects could advance. But this advance seems initially to be more like a leap, a leap across an abyss of pseudo-certainty and mental fog. By observing carefully, respecting human experience and thinking rationally, the leap could be possible and something urgently needed by us all can come into social existence.

== THE END ==