

ON THE METAPHOR: A DANCING AND POETIC APPROACH TO LIFE
INTRODUCTION

Why did I give my considerations on the metaphor such an important place in my “Flying Thoughts”? Mainly for two reasons: a personal one and a more objective one. Let us start with the more personal motivation.

Rereading the - all the same - many speeches I wrote during the six years as a Grand Master, I couldn’t but notice a rather frequent and spontaneous use of this literary figure of speech. One could rightfully wonder if maybe such a use was inspired by an inclination to pedantry or by an attempt to conceal the banality of my message thanks to a nice looking wrapping.

Maybe.

I prefer to think that my frequent use of metaphor found its origin in a growing awareness of the existence of a first yawning abyss, separating what we think and feel on the one hand (our reason), and what we say on the other hand (our intellect); and of a second one, separating what we say and what we actually do. What we feel and think has always a complexity that cannot be completely reproduced in words, because of the limited character of our concepts and of the linguistic structures in which they have to function. And who of us is not aware of the distance that all too often exists between the ideals we proclaim and our day-to-day conduct: in between there will always exist the subterranean world of our fears and our dreams, of our prejudices and our ever-changing opinions. As I hope to show, metaphors have some qualities, helping us to a certain degree to narrow the distances between thinking, saying and doing.

As for the more objective motivation of my choice, I hope to show that metaphoric language creates a space, enabling and inviting creative thinking and feeling within a well-defined framework of values. As you will see, the metaphor will be used throughout the whole of this booklet, and therefore it appears at the beginning, at the moment the sun rises in the morning to announce a new day.

1. A METAPHORICAL APPROACH TO THE METAPHOR

A surgical intervention is very often the only way to treat a life-threatening disease. The surgeon in charge has to his disposition instruments that are becoming more and more accurate and many of us are still living today, both thanks to the technical skills of the surgeon and his sophisticated instruments. But let us never forget that the final purpose of a successful intervention is nothing else than “to heal” the patient, to make him a living, dynamic “whole” again.

I hear now, loud and clear your legitimate question, “what has all this to do with the metaphor?” I’ll try to “show” you, to use an expression dear to Ludwig Wittgenstein who ended his famous “Tractatus logico-philosophicus” with “Wovon man nicht sprechen kann,

darüber muss man schweigen" (in English: "On what cannot be said, one has to keep silent"). In his later years, he added, "What cannot be said, can be shown"¹.

In order to make my point, I need to explain first the analogy between the surgical instruments and the words we use when we "say" or write something. Words necessarily fragments the reality in which we live: we give names to "things" and "objectifying", we isolate them from the reality that is everything but granular. Reality resembles rather a "fluid"² whole, continuous changing and moving (wave-like) according to a consistent order, built in the DNA of the universe. For Wittgenstein (as well for Spinoza as for me) "reality" and "life" are synonyms, indivisible wholes. That's why we have always to try going "beyond" the words to re-establish the "whole" (and "life") as I explained when I presented the notion of "flying thoughts" at the start of this book, just like the surgeon has to put down his instruments, hoping that the life-force of his patient will re-establish life again.

The metaphor still uses words of course, but not in the ordinary way: they become rather a kind of raw material confronting the "artist" – not unlike a piece of wood, marble or whatever other material – out of which he tries to "reveal" or "show" something that can't be said, and this in intense dialogue with the character or "spirit" of his material. This doesn't mean that everyone who writes a metaphor is an "artist", a poet more specifically: I wouldn't dare to call myself a poet or an artist! He who writes a metaphor rather moves in a kind of twilight zone between simple prose writing and writing a poem. Both however want to "show" something that can't really be said using clear, simple words.

2. DEFINING AND SITUATING THE CONCEPT

Although I'm sure all of you are already familiar with the concept of "metaphor", I nevertheless feel compelled to start with a more precise definition, situating the concept within the world of linguistics and the cognitive sciences. It is a question of intellectual hygiene, like washing the hands before diner.

But first: a word about the etymology. The term "metaphor" goes back to the ancient Greek noun "metaphora", derived from the verb "metapherein", originally meaning "to transfer", "to transform", "taking something for something else". The first to think about the phenomenon of "metaphors" and who formulated a theory is Aristotle. For him a metaphor is the act of giving a thing a name that belongs to something else. According to him a metaphor is a means of poetical, not every-day conventional language. In his "Rhetoric" he says, *"It is metaphor above all else that gives clearness, charm and distinction to the style."* An example is the expression "evening of life", meaning that old age is to life, what "evening" is to a "day". This is called today the "substitution theory". Since the 1930s the literature on metaphor is growing fast and in many fields: philosophy, psychology, neurolinguistics, sociology etc.....

¹ Everyone will not necessarily understand what we try to show by a metaphor in the same way, but what is important is that it invites the one who reads it to creatively think.

² The "fluid" whole, is of course meant here as a metaphor, and to be taken in the literary sense.

Dear friends, don't panic! For today, I will spare you an exhaustive account of this abundant literature, and to please you, I'll make a jump of more than two millennia: we jump from father Aristotle to our present-day George Lakoff.

George Lakoff is an American cognitive linguist; he is known for his thesis that the lives of individuals are significantly influenced by the central metaphors they use to explain complex phenomena. He expounded his views in his book "Metaphors We Live By", written in collaboration with his colleague Mark Johnson. Lakoff is a professor of linguistics at the University of California, Berkeley, where he has taught since 1972.

His co-author Johnson is a Knight Professor of Liberal Arts and Sciences in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Oregon. He is well known for contributions to embodied philosophy, cognitive science and cognitive linguistics. In his book *The Body in The Mind* he developed a theory of image schema as basic building blocks in cognitive linguistics for conceptual metaphor, as well as for language and abstract reasoning generally.

In his article "The contemporary theory of metaphor" George Lakoff argues that:

The locus of metaphor is not in language at all, but in the way we conceptualize one mental domain in terms of another. The general theory of metaphor is given by characterising such cross-domain mappings. And in the process, everyday abstract concepts like time, states, change, causation and purpose also turn out to be metaphorical. The result is that metaphor is absolutely central to ordinary natural language semantics, and that the study of literary metaphor is but an extension of every-day metaphor.

In her book "*The Life of the Mind*" the philosopher Hannah Arendt too points out that the use of metaphors is characteristic of our conceptual language in general, designed to make manifest the life of the mind; the words we use in strictly philosophical discourse are invariably derived from expressions originally related to the world as given to our five bodily senses, from whose experience they then, as Locke pointed out, are "transferred" - *metapherein*, carried over - to more abstruse significations, and made to stand for ideas that do not come under the cognisance of our senses.

As you can see, our present-day insight into the metaphor has evolved a lot since Aristotle. One of the most important differences is that Aristotle concentrated only on the metaphor itself, not on the context. Today we understand that a sentence can have a literal or a metaphorical meaning, depending on the context. When we say, "Eli is a child", this is to be understood literally if Eli is a 3-year old; it becomes obviously a metaphorical utterance if it turns out that he is actually 78 years.

A last word about the different categories of metaphors:

A "dead" metaphor, is one in which the sense of a transferred image is not present anymore; examples are: "branches of science", "table-legs"; when I welcomed you, calling you "dear" readers, the adjective "dear" is an example of a dead metaphor: originally "dear" meant "expensive", economically "valuable".... In the Dutch language we didn't forget the original

meaning: "duur" has still the meaning of expensive; the same is true for the German "teuer" and in French the term "cher" is used as well in the original sense of "expensive", as in the metaphorical sense, depending on the context.

An "active" metaphor is one which, by contrast to a dead metaphor, is not part of daily language; it is therefore recognisable as a metaphor; example "you are my sunshine."

The cliché, being a metaphor that is neither new, nor has been lexicalised yet; example "he eats like a horse"; George Orwell coined them by the derogatory term "dying metaphors", metaphors which have lost all evocative power and are used because they save people the trouble of inventing phrases for themselves." (In his essay: "Politics and the English language").

3. ABOUT SOME INTRINSIC QUALITIES OF METAPHORS *INTRODUCTORY REMARKS*

I want to return here just for moment to the personal "why" of my choice.

Basically, my interest grew out of my personal experience that to understand something, doesn't necessarily mean that it becomes meaningful to our life.

To understand something concerns mainly the intellect³, to become meaningful something must appeal to the whole person, his heart included. It is in the process of trying to transmit some meaningful message that sometimes, one or the other metaphor comes to mind, spontaneously. Personally, I think that one cannot consciously create new metaphors: they rather reveal themselves as a result of the incessant endeavour to find a way out of a problem or a way to transmit an insight. Maybe it isn't even a question of "transmission" of an insight, it could be that the metaphor itself creates that insight. Anyway, a rationally created metaphor would miss the poetry and the magic that makes it work.

In literature it is generally admitted today that metaphors can have indeed a "world-disclosing" quality, sometimes set against the "problem-solving" character of non-metaphoric language. Professor Andrew Bowie of the Anglia Polytechnic University in Cambridge criticises this separation in his work: "Schelling and Modern European Philosophy": according to him metaphors can be, as they indubitably are, heuristically effective in redefining and solving problems in virtually every domain. But metaphors can also be useful for starting a paper or to get in the mood for writing. In my case it started with the story of the white sheet of paper.

3.1 THE STORY OF THE WHITE SHEET OF PAPER

In the beginning there was the blank sheet of paper. The research theme "The Metaphor" appeared as a title, and the sheet of paper lost forever its original virginity: its disturbed

³ By "intellect" I understand here that part of our mind, designed to "grasp" the world around us by giving "names" to things. Once "named" we have easily the illusion to understand the things named: we can manipulate them for our own utilitarian use.

whiteness was suddenly transformed into a slumbering world of oriented potentiality, waiting for the liberating hour of awakening.

I, as the would-be author, couldn't claim the same innocence of course, being the obvious guilty intruder in this silent world of infinite potentiality. To a certain degree though, I nevertheless shared some innocence with this white sheet of paper: you see, I could never have imagined to end up in a very intricate world where linguistics, psychology, anthropology, sociology, and probably a lot of other "logoi" would meet to comply with the biblical injunction to multiply and to be fertile. I clearly was heading for a long period of restless sleep, hoping for creative dream-activity. I'm sure you will recognize here not only the idle fellow I am, but also the anguish most authors or would-be authors meet with when they start writing. I used here already a few metaphors to sketch in a plastic way this kind of anguish and I can try to clarify them by using other metaphors. The challenge the writer created for himself transforms itself into a mountain to be climbed, and reveals itself more often than not as being much higher than expected. In this image a barely hidden desperation is shining through in his search for the most appropriate path to the top. He is painfully aware that whatever path he chooses, there will always exist a potentially infinite number of other paths, which, maybe, could offer better perspectives. As you can see, the metaphor gives you not only factual information but also intends to transmit feelings and emotions. The metaphor appears here as a kind of painting transmitting an overall picture that can be freely interpreted: as such, metaphors are guardians of freedom, although the unfolding of this freedom happens within the given borders of the painting.

In general, it can be said that metaphors throw a bridge over the abyss, separating the world of our senses and the many whimsical forms living in our shadowy inner world.

Unfortunately, the painting as metaphor has little or no "world-disclosing" or solving quality. Even so, and by association, it brought me to another, more dynamic metaphor, namely life as text and context: a metaphor that proved more inspirational in that it incites to some interesting questions... without answering them.

3.2 LIFE AS TEXT AND CONTEXT

Each of us is born somewhere in the middle of a story that is being written by others: by our parents in the first place of course, but they themselves write their story within the bigger story of their community, their tradition and their culture. With our appearance, the story being written inevitably changes and waits patiently the time that we too start writing our own "small" story within the bigger one. What and how we will write that story will depend largely on our personal and free choices, but not entirely: our story, as that of our parents, has to fit in a whole range of hierarchically structured bigger stories, all contained in the one Ultimate Story, being written by the Universe itself. In other words: in our search for the meaning of it all - our appearance in this world, and our specific place within that world -, we came up with the metaphor of a Universe as "text and context", as one Big Story, containing a whole lot of smaller stories, hierarchically structured. Another aspect of a story is that we write it to be read by others, who, in the act of reading, will compose their own story, interpreting ours and giving it a place in their own life.

I think this is an example of a metaphor at its best: it, curiously enough, leaves us with a sense of satisfaction, probably because it gives us a kind of hold on what otherwise would be - and probably will always be - beyond our human, all too human understanding. I said "curiously enough", because this metaphor raises mainly questions, and gives few or no answers. So, it raises for instance the interesting question if the universe is to be understood (metaphorically of course) as an existing and finished text, that we humans searchingly have to decipher, to discover and to interpret. The work of our physicists and astrophysicists could give us the impression that this universe of ours is such an already existing text, written in mathematical language. Or, could it be that the universe, like we ourselves, is a story that is continually being written, eventually in collaboration with us. Has the universe a meaning in itself, to be discovered by us, or are we those who create meaning? The known astrophysicist Trinh Xuan Thuan uses in this context another beautiful and interesting metaphor: the universe, he says, is like a fugue by Bach, in the sense that science is discovering more and more of its notes, but the melody will always remain a secret. Science will gradually come closer to that secret, but without ever being able to entirely unlock it.

So, you see, some metaphors do have the capacity to incite us to ask ever more relevant questions, without imprisoning us within dogmatic answers. Instead of final answers, they provide us frames of reference, allowing us to create order out of chaos, and to do so, again and again, each time from a new perspective. In the world of metaphors, answers are not the issue; the capacity to ask ever more accurate questions is the central issue. Metaphors do not give answers; they open new paths of inquiry.

We can conclude this chapter on the intrinsic qualities of metaphors by saying that metaphors are not meant merely to see beyond the things presented by our five limited senses; in fact, one can see beyond them only by using other metaphors. It is as though the ability to comprehend experience through metaphors is a kind of sixth sense, like seeing or touching or hearing, with metaphors providing the only way to perceive and experience much of the world. Metaphor is as much part of our functioning as our sense of touch, and as precious.

Each of us is a traveller in this life, looking for the best road to take, and more often than not, changing roads on their journey. Each of us is moving towards a point situated somewhere beyond his or her horizon, perfectly knowing that with each step this horizon moves with him/her and knowing, as a consequence, that the destination is unreachable.

We are searching for Truth, fully aware that this Truth manifests itself in infinity of forms, which often conceal more than they reveal, not unlike a sparkling dance of Shiva.

We are clearly restless souls, tightrope walkers whose art consists essentially in keeping a balance that is never acquired once and for all, but has to be achieved, time and again.

What have we learned from all this? First of all, we learned that we have all the reasons in the world to be humble. Our most highflying ideas and philosophies have their roots, deep in our earth, in our sensory perceptions, from which they sprang to perform increasingly

complex dances, combining, separating, joining. These dances are in our languages essentially translated into metaphors. These dances can be bewitching, they can fill us with joy and admiration, they can offer us new and fresh insights or give us an oceanic feeling, and much more. But then I also learned that not all metaphors have universal value: many of our metaphors are tied up with our specific language and cultural environment. Other languages and other cultures know their own metaphors, defining the way they experience the world and life; they know their own kind of dances, as beautiful as ours and as sophisticated, and they enjoy their own kind of poetry. So far, the lesson in humility I learned.

The other lesson we learned is the importance of escaping the force of gravitation emanating from rusty and “closed” opinions and stubborn prejudices: metaphors can give us the wings we need to glide high above our human, all too human worries, and to design new enchanting dances that make our life meaningful...and happy, in a light-footed way of course, because elegance is an essential part of the dance.

3.3 ON THE WATER-METAPHOR

“Everybody has a little bit of the sun and moon in them. Everybody has a little bit of man, woman, and animal in them. Darks and lights in them. Everyone is part of a connected cosmic system. Part earth and sea, wind and fire, with some salt and dust swimming in them. We have a universe within ourselves that mimics the universe outside. None of us are just black or white, or never wrong and always right. No one. No one exists without polarities. Everybody has good and bad forces working with them, against them, and within them.”

By Suzy Kassem: PART SUN AND MOON

Finally, I would like to share with you a metaphor that inspired me a lot, and gave me much stuff for creative and associative thinking. I found it in Fritjof Capra’s “Conversations with Remarkable people”⁴ (I will refer later to this book as “FC: CRP”). The metaphor was told to him by Stanislav Grof, writer of “Realms of the Human Unconsciousness”, New York: Dutton, 1976. I quote:

The universal consciousness (can be) likened to the ocean – a fluid, undifferentiated mass – and the first stage of creation to the formation of waves. A wave can be viewed as an individual entity, and yet it is obvious that the wave is the ocean and the ocean is the wave. There is no ultimate separation.

⁴ This book is edited by Bantam Books, 1989. Fritjof Capra is a physicist who received his Ph.D. from the University of Vienna and has done research in high-energy physics at several European and American universities.

The next stage of creation would be a wave breaking on the rocks and spraying droplets of water into the air, which will exist as individual entities for a short time before the ocean swallows them again. So, there you have fleeting moments of separate existence.

The next stage in this metaphoric thinking would be a wave that hits the rocky shore and withdraws again but leaves a small pool of tidal water. It may take a long time until the next wave comes and reclaims the water that was left there. During that time, the tidal pool is a separate entity, and yet it is an extension of the ocean that eventually will return to its source.

Imagine, as a next stage, water evaporating and forming a cloud. Now the original unity is obscured and concealed by an actual transformation, and it takes some knowledge of physics to realize that the cloud is the ocean and the ocean is the cloud. Yet the water in the cloud will eventually reunite with the ocean in the form of rain.

The final separation, where the link with the original source appears to be completely forgotten, is often illustrated by a snowflake that has crystallized from the water in the cloud, which had originally evaporated from the ocean. Here you have a highly structured, highly individual, separate entity that bears, seemingly, no resemblance to its source. Now you need some sophisticated knowledge about water to recognize that the snowflake is the ocean and the ocean the snowflake. And in order to reunite with the ocean, the snowflake has to give up its structure and individuality; it has to go through an ego death, as it were, to return to its source.

So: now we know that we are all beautiful, lovable snowflakes. But also, and above all, that each of us, is already the ocean, which makes us eternal... For those who fear the death of their seducing and addictive “ego”, I would like to remind them that this “ego” was, is and will always be a dangerous illusion, source of fundamental ignorance and unhappiness for themselves and others. The beauty of the metaphor is that it is a happy marriage between the eastern way of looking at the world⁵, and the new – and still evolving - worldview with which modern quantum physics confronts us today.

2.4 WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THIS WATER-METAPHOR?

1. The Universe is “one”.
2. All is interconnected: we are all part of the “Ocean”.
3. Every part of the “Ocean” is the Ocean.
4. This “Ocean” is a metaphor for the Universal Consciousness.
5. Our individual consciousness (the drop) is part of the Universal Consciousness.

⁵ I think here is the first place of Buddhism and more particularly, Tibetan Buddhism.

6. Every consciousness *is* the Universal Consciousness.

2.5 WHICH IDEAS CAN BE ASSOCIATED WITH GROF'S "OCEAN"?

1. This "Grofean Ocean" is not so different from Peirce's "Nothingness" of the "beginning", although there can be of course no "beginning", because this Nothingness or Pure Zero is situated beyond space-time⁶. Because there is no space-time, this Pure Zero can only be imagined as a massless, dimensionless, virtual mathematical point.
2. This virtual point was – according to Peirce – Pure Potentiality... and potentiality wouldn't be "potentiality", if it weren't already pregnant with the tendency to be actualized. My metaphor of the "blank sheet of paper" could be helpful to get the "feeling" of this potentiality. I called it metaphorically the "Life-bearing Ocean" of Nothingness, Mother of all we know and all we know not. It is evident that it can't be but a metaphor: in reality there is of course no "infinite blank sheet of paper", nor an "ocean".
3. For Grof, the "first" manifestation of actualisation was the creation of an infinite number of waves, more precisely: quantum-possibility-waves.
4. I remind my dear readers that the "Grofean Ocean" is a metaphor for the Universal Consciousness, and that each "wave" is a kind of hologram of this Universal Consciousness: it only represents a particular perspective of this Universal Consciousness, to which it always must return in the end.
5. In the vision of Peirce there is however an important difference, or so I presume: although he too recognizes such universal consciousness (or: a cosmic "quale") which contains all past, present and future consciousnesses, he replaces the "Grofean waves" – which have a very impermanent life - with an infinity of "feeling entities with consciousness", which he calls "quali", each conscious feeling standing for a specific "quality". Each "quale" (singular of quali) is a simple, non-divisible and eternal entity, each representing a particular quality with infinite potentiality. The advantage of this view is of course that the most important part of each of us – our consciousness – has the guaranty of a life in a world beyond space-time.
6. For Peirce, one quale can "fuse" with another quale to give birth to a third totally different quale, likewise simple and non-divisible. See also the part dealing with the "two grammars" or "the two sets of basic rules of the cosmic game". Most importantly, a fusion of two "quali" doesn't efface the originals: that would be – by definition – impossible, each quale being eternal, simple and indivisible. But this is a personal interpretation: Peirce himself didn't mention this.
7. According to Peirce, to every being – physical or mental – is "attached" a specific quale. During our human life we will accumulate, as a matter of course, a mass of ideas, feelings, emotions, expectations and disillusiones, and much more. They will change constantly our consciousness and self-awareness.

⁶ To better understand this part, I refer the reader to the Part devoted to Peirce's "exact scientific cosmogony".

8. The fact that, notwithstanding this continuous change of our “states of consciousness”, we always have the feeling to be the same individual is due to the fusion of succeeding quali, giving birth to another, indivisible and simple quale.

2.6 ON THE METAPHOR AND THE “BOOTSTRAP⁷ THEORY”

What Geoffrey Chew does is to forget altogether the “trap-net” of building blocks, being the manifold particles, we know or suppose today in quantum-physics. Metaphorically, we can think of these particles as “words” making up a sentence. As I said, explaining what I mean by “flying thoughts” in the beginning of this book, once we got the meaning of the sentence, we have to forget about, what I called, “the fishing-net”, because words are but tools – and nothing more - to communicate an idea. I further said that the same is true for the text as a whole, and even for the “context”. It is what Chew proposes to do with the “trap-net” of particles.

You know in the meanwhile what a metaphor is. Before making use of it to make it easier to understand what the “bootstrap theory” is saying, I still have to introduce the notion in the most general terms. By the way, that is the only thing I’m capable of, being myself quite illiterate where it concerns sophisticated mathematics. And even for such “introduction in general terms”, I need the help of Fritjof Capra⁸, himself a physicist who worked together with Chew⁹. I quote him here:

According to the bootstrap hypothesis, nature cannot be reduced to fundamental entities, like fundamental building blocks of matter, but has to be understood entirely through self-consistency¹⁰. Things exist by virtue of their mutually consistent relationships, and all of physics has to follow uniquely from the requirement that its components be consistent with one another and with themselves. The mathematical framework of bootstrap physics is

⁷ **The New World Dictionary** defines the term “bootstrap” as: lift or raise oneself by one’s own unaided efforts. **Google** gives: a technique of loading a program into a computer by means of a few initial instructions that enable the introduction of the rest of the program from an input device; the technique of starting with existing resources to create something more complex and effective.

⁸ Fritjof Capra is an Austrian physicist who received his Ph.D. from the University of Vienna and has done research in high-energy physics at several European and American universities. In addition to his many technical research papers, Dr. Capra has written and lectured extensively about the philosophical implications of modern science.

⁹ Geoffrey Chew was an American theoretical physicist, known for his bootstrap theory of strong interactions (1924-2019).

¹⁰ Consistency means: agreement, harmony, or compatibility, especially correspondence or uniformity among the parts of a complex thing. Self-consistency is harmony within a person or thing itself.

known as S-matrix theory. It is based on the concept of S-matrix or “scattering matrix”, which was originally proposed by Heisenberg in the 1940s and has been developed, over the past two decades, into a complex mathematical structure, ideally suited to combine the principles of quantum mechanics and relativity theory. Many physicists have contributed to this development, but Geoffrey Chew has been the unifying force and philosophical leader in S-matrix theory, much in the same way that Niels Bohr was the unifying force and philosophical leader in the development of quantum theory half a century earlier.

I invite my more mathematical-minded readers – I count amongst them some of my daughters and granddaughters – to try understanding the S-matrix-theory: I’m convinced it has all the qualities of a magnificent and beautiful poem... for those who are lucky enough to understand this specific mathematical language!

Not being myself among these “happy few”, I focus entirely on the underlying philosophy of the theory as expounded brilliantly by Fritjof Capra. I’m very grateful for the joy he procured me, explaining the philosophical implications of Chew’s theory.

Why do these philosophical implications appeal to me?

There are many reasons, some intellectual, some more poetical, flirting with my somewhat mystical nature.

Here are the two most important for me:

° I refer to section 2.2 where I wrote about life as “text and context”, and how each of us writes his own, personal story, imbedded in a greater, more encompassing story, and this including finally the Great Story of the Universe. All of these separate stories must be not only “self-consistent”, but also “consistent” with the higher story, ad infinitum. I think you see easily the connection with Chew’s “bootstrap-theory”.

° Referring to my introducing the concept of “flying concepts”, I quoted Friederich Nietzsche where he justly reminded us that words and sentences are, in the end, just tools: they don’t give us reality “as it is”. They are important of course because they are the tools, enabling us to communicate ideas and feelings, but we may never forget that they are nothing more than “fishing-nets” to catch fish (in this case: ideas and feelings), and once they’ve done their “job”, we have to try to forget the net (here: the words and sentences) and enjoy the ideas and feelings themselves. Most of the time however it seems as if we are ourselves inescapably entangled in the net, joining the fish, and are convinced that it is impossible to free ourselves from the net... and then we will never learn to fly.

These “words” can be likened to the so-called “zoo of particles”, still the most used tools in the science of physics today. Geoffrey Chew’s bootstrap-theory, forgets from the start this “net” of particles, what comes down to forget – not the story as story – but the text and context in so far that they use words and sentences. Even I myself have it difficult to imagine

a “wordless story”, but that doesn’t mean that Chew’s theory has an unavoidable attraction to me. As I said so many times in my earlier speeches and columns: life and the Universe are essentially “one”, words dissect this living body to examine its parts, forgetting that life is only to be found in the whole, not in the ripping apart of this whole.