

Remedies to Global Crisis: "Allopathic" or "Homeopathic"? Metaphorical Complementarity of "Conventional" and "Alternative" Models

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Abstract

Explores the metaphorical discourse regarding the "health" of economic and financial systems in the light of the discourse in health care concerning the appropriateness of conventional medical approaches in contrast with "alternative" or "complementary" therapies. Common to the discourse in both cases are forms of denial, deception and demonisation, as well as concerns with remedy, recovery and replicability. The question raised is whether, as in the case of health care, it is more fruitful to explore an appropriate mix of both conventional and alternative approaches to ensure the health of the global financial system. Chinese experience of such a mix in the case of health care is cited as a guide to possible future relevance to more effective approaches to the financial system.

Keywords: health care, metaphor, finance, economics, conventional therapy, alternative therapy, homeopathy, naturopathy, complementary medicine

Introduction

At the time of a global financial crisis for which the adequacies of proposed conventional remedies have as yet to be demonstrated – and with further economic consequences yet to emerge – it is appropriate to explore mindsets through which the remedial response to any form of globality under stress might be articulated and envisaged.

The argument here is that there is a curious parallel in the discourse – to the extent that there is any – between the remedial strategies of "allopathic remedies" and those of "alternative remedies",

whether in the case of the global financial system or in the case of global approaches to individual health care.

"Homeopathy" is used here metaphorically as a widely recognized exemplar of the therapies of "alternative medicine" as distinct from those of "allopathic" conventional medicine, understood here as typical of the financial prescriptions of the G20 Summit (April 2009). A more generic focus on the metaphoric potential of the range of alternative remedies is discussed in a concluding section.

Relevance of Therapeutic Metaphors to Economics

The use of therapeutic metaphors for a challenged economic system was illustrated in 2005 by Andrei Illarionov (economic advisor of the Russian President) in an insightful press conference on *Russia's Economic Diseases and Ways to Treat Them* (2005):

...between the economy as a sphere of activities and humans as an organism, there is much in common. There is also a lot in common between economics and medicine as spheres of research. In fact, there also are parallels in our language and each of us has made use of that many times, when commenting on certain economic events, using medical terms, while sometimes not even paying attention to that. We say sometimes: the economy is ill, the economy recovers, the temperature of the economy is high, the economy is in paralysis, and there are lots of other medical terms used to describe the state of an economic body...

Like pathology in a human body, there may be different pathologies among economic pathologies. For instance, in a human body there may be cardiovascular diseases. In the economic sphere, something similar happens to diseases in the financial system, because the financial system performs functions similar to those performed by the blood circulation system in a human body. There are locomotor apparatus diseases. In the economic sphere, similar diseases are described as structural problems. They emerge when some or other parts of the economy have been distorted and structural reform is required or, in other words, surgery is required to mend inborn or acquired deviations. There are digestion diseases in a human body, and there may be similar problems in an economic body. There are respiratory diseases in a human body, and something similar may happen in the economy. Perhaps, in the economy the analogy is the energy sector, because it provides energy to the economy like the respiratory system supplies oxygen to a human body.

Naturally, there are lots of nervous system diseases, mental diseases, diseases related to other systems in the body. So, to get some idea of that, one may take a look in the medical encyclopedia, a doctor's reference book. So, for a human body and an economic body, the set of diseases is similar, as it turns out.

Illarionov offers a brief survey of an extraordinary range of diseases of economic relevance. His unusual press conference notably refers at some length to possibilities of treatment, including homeopathy:

There are lots of other diseases, pathologies, syndromes, and where possible, we may touch upon some of them, but as we are discussing diseases, we have at least three main spheres of medicine studying those diseases, those dealing with, first, symptoms, with monitoring of economic behavior, deviations from the norm, second, their diagnostics, primarily with the help of statistics and economic analysis, diagnosing some or other diseases and finally, issuing recommendations concerned their treatment, which may belong to homeopathy, therapeutics or surgery.

Andrei Illarionov is now a senior fellow in the Center for Global Liberty and Prosperity of the Cato Institute (Washington, DC), which might well be held to be an exemplar of "allopathic" strategy development. In considering appropriate responses to the economic crisis of 2008-2009, use is also made of a medical metaphor by Hazel Henderson (2009) – who might be more closely associated with "homeopathic" strategy development.

Systemic Remedies: "Allopathic" vs "Homeopathic"

Medical metaphors may indeed be used to describe the economic remedies. The economic sectors are then to be compared with "organs" of the economic "body". But in exploring the labelling of "allopathy" and "homeopathy" as contrasting approaches there is a significant caveat which is relevant to the argument here regarding their potential use as metaphors.

As described in the *Wikipedia* entry on allopathy, the term is not commonly accepted by the world of medicine, namely the broad category of medical practice that is sometimes called Western medicine, biomedicine, scientific medicine, modern medicine, mainstream medicine or evidence-based medicine. The term was introduced, with pejorative connotations, by those seeking to contrast it with the philosophy and practice of homeopathy, considered by them to be more appropriate (see *Homeopathy and Allopathy*). Briefly:

- for practitioners of "medicine", any other therapy is a dubious "alternative", and the label "allopathy" is not considered meaningful
- for practitioners of any "alternative" therapy, notably including "homeopathy", mainstream "medicine" is framed as "allopathy"

This definitional game-playing – a binary, adversarial, "us and them" mindset – is closely paralleled by the relationship between mainstream political economy and proposed "alternatives" (notably to the paradigm of economic growth).

With the importance attached to the G20 Summit (April 2009) and the remedies it proposed for economic "stimulus" packages by industrialized nations – plus the increased financial buffer for vulnerable economies through the IMF – there is a resemblance to allopathic remedial strategies. Particular "medications" are selected and targeted to particular sectors of the economy in the expectation that this will engender a healthy global response in the economic system as a whole. Various forms of "buffer" are made available to those who do not respond as desired, or experience "pain" during the therapy prescribed.

This perspective is highlighted by Frank Shostak (2009) in distinguishing between the "allopathic" strategy adopted by Obama and an alternative based on naturopathy (which includes homeopathy):

It struck me this morning, while listening to Obama talking about "saving the patient" that is our sickened economy, that the way that he intends to treat the patient is entirely parallel with allopathic medicine. The patient is sick. The treatments he wants to give are suppressive; they do not treat the cause nor induce a cure, rather they suppressed the symptoms of the disease and drive it deeper into the patient. This suppression of an acute disease causes the disease to shift to a chronic condition with much more fatal complications. And so it is.

The treatment I wish that Obama would offer would be one based in Naturopathic principles. What our sick economy needs is not more bailouts to suppress the symptoms of its illness. Rather, the economy needs to go through a healing crisis, during which it gets a hot fever and exudes waste products from every orifice. Our economy needs to eject all the corrupt banks, the military-industrial complex, the corporate-medical system and auto-makers like so much snot, vomit, sweat and diarrhea. The patient would feel weak but much better after such a crisis.

One "official" approach to an "alternative" – indeed one that might possibly be said to be "naturopathic" given its emphasis on "nature" – was taken by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) which, with leading economists, launched on 22 October 2008, the Green Economy Initiative (GEI) – aimed at "seizing an historic opportunity to bring about tomorrow's economy today". Ironically it might be said that "global warming" is just such a "fever" – even to the extent that a rise of 2°C or more is considered potentially fatal to both the human body and to many on the planet.

The financial crisis has been engendered through the inadequately constrained risk-taking logic of conventional financial economics – whose proponents are in the main largely unrepentant. It might be said that an equivalent is to be seen in the level of "medical mistakes" made by the proponents of conventional medicine – and hence their dependence on very high levels of insurance to compensate for the risks they typically take and for which they may be held responsible, as perceived by the insurance industry, especially if malpractice can be proven. There would seem to be little possibility that malpractice will be recognized in relation to the financial crisis. Ironically those who might be so accused are being rewarded – in fulfillment of their contracts.

With respect to the financial crisis and an op-ed column by Paul Krugman (2008) one respondent (Mike B), as with Shostak, points to a possible complementarity between the two styles of remedy:

In seeking a solution, the closest analogy or metaphor that I could find would be in the medical field. Our current system of medicine is largely based upon allopathy – a system where opposites are used to force the body into a balanced state. In other words, if one is too agitated or excitable, you introduce a depressant or calming agent into the process.

In our economic example, where the economy is entering into a dangerous pattern of increased depression or inactivity, we need to excite or invigorate the economic body through a bold stimulus package – a sort of economic amphetamine.

Under ideal circumstances, my preference would be for a more holistic approach – a homeopathic approach that treats the core deficiencies in an effort to restore the body to its natural, healthy state. But that will have to come later. Right now, emergency care or treatment is warranted. We need shock treatment to restore economic sanity and prevent the patient from going off the deep end. Clearly, the patient – our economy – is in the Emergency Room and quick, bold, and deliberate action is called for.

Those drawn to "alternative" economic models tend to have close personal experience of the inadequacies of the "conventional" model and believe that there are more appropriate ways of acting in support of community development. This is of course framed as totally misguided by those promoting conventional approaches – now somewhat at a disadvantage given the many with direct experience of their application. Again the parallel is to be seen with health therapies – where those whose health has not been improved by allopathic remedies are drawn to a variety of proposed alternatives.

The 3 D's: Denial, Deception and Demonisation

However, the future may find the quality of the discourse between "conventional" approaches and "alternatives" to be quite pathetic – whatever the justification for those most directly involved. Perhaps to be caricatured as a combination of "allopathetic" and "homeopathic" !

Denial: The "conventional" and the "alternative" approaches, whether with respect to the global economic system or individual health, are in general quite systematic in the denial of the merits of "the other". This may simply take the form of ignoring the achievements of the other. In a more active mode this takes the form of active denial -- notably focused on the quality of the research and proof by which the recommended methods are substantiated and the results evaluated.

With respect to the global economic system, this has been most evident in the parallel discourses of those configured around the World Economic Forum (Davos) and the World Social Forum (Porto Alegre). In the current phase of the argument, the World Economic Forum is faced with embarrassment at the failure of its globalization agenda whose claimed successes it has previously trumpeted widely. The World Social Forum – with five heads of state and 100,000 activists gathered to promote an alternative economic model in face of recession – indulged in a comprehensible riposte (Carroll, 2009).

With respect to health delivery systems, their failure even in the most advanced industrialized countries, is only too well recognized by anyone with personal experience of their challenges. They are only too obvious to the impoverished. This in no way prevents the proponents of such systems, whether the conventional medical profession or the pharmaceutical industry, from denying the value of any other approach

to health care and delivery as risky, if not dangerous (although substantive "proof" of such claims is seldom offered). The fact that there may be no way that adequate health care can be supplied, notably at the cost demanded, is considered to be irrelevant. At the same time, alternative therapies – even when reframed non-confrontationally as "complementary" therapies – are dismayed at the lack of responsiveness of conventional health delivery and their seeming incapacity to deal humanely with the individual as a whole person.

Deception: Whether conventional or alternative, each is perceived by the other to indulge in a degree of deception as to the effectiveness of its remedies and the claims it makes regarding the effectiveness of the other.

In the case of the economic system, "deception" has been a key feature of the sale of "toxic assets" to unsuspecting (or gullible) buyers. It is now argued that the regulatory measures were inadequate – whether or not the new measures proposed by the G20 prove to be any more adequate, given the propensity of those so regulated to deceive whenever this is profitable. The role of so-called "dark pools of liquidity" has recently been highlighted as necessarily operating "under the radar". The tendency of the regulators themselves to deceive – if only regarding the efficacy of their oversight – has also become evident.

To what extent can those advocating and implementing alternative economic models be said to be indulging in deception and misleading claims? At one extreme there are the many examples of intentional communities that are subsequently recognized by their supporters to be practicing a degree of deception. Many larger socialist experiments are accused of being defective with regard to the improvements promised. Other than communist systems of Europe and China, there are the cases of Tanzania and Cuba. Such accusations are of course now made against Venezuela. Whilst the many experiments in local exchange trading systems (LETS) appear to offer possibilities that are welcomed by their members, the question is whether their partial success on the scale at which they are implemented is inherently deceptive with respect to their applicability to larger scale and global systems – as claimed.

In the case of the conventional health delivery systems, they are held to be deceptive both in the level of care effectively offered and in the efficacy of the remedies prescribed. Critics argue that many of the remedies may be toxic, even known to be so. They point to the deception associated with "sponsored research" in which eminent physicians effectively approve results generated in a less than transparent manner. Claims made through costly advertising campaigns as to the efficacy of the resultant products may well be considered suspect. Critics would also claim a degree of deception on the part of professional regulatory bodies with whom "cosy" relationships are cultivated. In this context, most questionable is the objectivity of allopathic professionals regarding terminal patients and their access to euthanasia – given that patients in that condition are a major source of income for the allopathic industry. Is this pattern also to be found with respect to economic entities in "terminal" condition?

Alternative therapies emerge from a long tradition in which there is a complex mix of charlatans ("snake oil" vendors) and those whose health care is appreciated by multitudes. The rule has been **caveat emptor** – a notion considered curiously unnecessary in the case of conventional health care. There it is replaced by the detachment

associated with the phrase "you are free to seek a second opinion". To what extent is an array of professional opinions any more deceptive than the offerings in the alternative therapy market – especially given the level of medical malpractice, to which insurance premiums are very sensitive? As to claims regarding "snake oil" vendors, one might ask how well this label applies to those creatively promoting the sale of toxic financial assets to the gullible.

Demonisation: Again, whether conventional or alternative, each is perceived by the other as inherently dangerous in terms of the potential harm it may cause. The term "allopathy" is readily to be seen as a deliberate negative framing of conventional medicine.

In the case of economic systems, this has been most evident on the larger scale between capitalist and socialist systems – each readily considered by the other as "evil". Following the decline of the purely communist form of socialism, this is now translated into the relationships between "right" and "left" in the political arena – each again being susceptible to demonisation, and prepared to engage in it. With respect to more recent approaches to framing economic alternatives, as noted above the World Economic Forum and World Social Forum readily indulge in a form of demonisation of each other.

Potentially more vicious is the manner in which any economic "alternatives" are viewed as a fundamentally dangerous threat to the values and way of life of "conventional" capitalist systems – as the response by the USA to the experiments of Cuba, Chile and Venezuela have demonstrated. "Alternatives" cannot be tolerated. The evangelist Pat Robertson has been readily able to frame Hugo Chavez as an embodiment of evil – thereby justifying his surgical removal by the USA. Advocates of conventional economic systems have however proven to be very silent regarding who should be sanctioned – as "evil" – in relation to the collapse of the financial system, although suitable scapegoats have been highlighted. The challenge for conventional economics is that the level of social unrest, now engendered by those who are feeling the pain consequent on the application of its methodologies, readily leads to many in elite positions being demonised – rightly or wrongly (as always).

Eminent advocates of conventional medicine freely and vigorously expound on the potentially mortal dangers of alternative therapies – even though cynics note that it is because they are undermining sales of allopathic medication. Little is said in that context regarding the dangers of allopathic medication – despite the need for heavy insurance against malpractice. It is of course the case that advocates of alternative therapies accumulate evidence regarding the "evil" practices of "Big Pharma" – which are assumed to extend to "dirty tricks" wherever possible. Of course "snake oil" vendors may be discovered to be delivering potions which are either dangerous in their own right or as a result of deluding those in pain into avoiding more appropriate therapy. Alternative therapists may even have strong views in this respect with regard to practitioners of "other" alternative therapies.

The 3 R's: Remedy, Recovery, Replicability

Whilst any set of "3 D's", like that above, is characterized by a quality of "targeted" focus, paradoxically – as with "conventional" approaches to global economic or health challenges – any set of "3 R's" is likely to be much more diffuse in its implications. Curiously the quality of this diffuseness might be compared with that challenged in relation to "alternative" approaches. Whether economic, physiological or psychosocial, "health" is necessarily subtle and qualitative rather than being readily assessed in quantitative terms.

Remedy: Whatever the ill, any viable remedy tends to call upon resources and understanding beyond a simplistic framework. This may be as true of corporate bankruptcy as of a broken leg. These resources may be understood as "extra-systemic" – "transcending" any in-the-box systemic framework.

The year 2009 is witness to an extraordinary focus on the subtleties of "building confidence" as vital to the viability of the financial system. The actors within the latter could not be more quantitative in focus or more prepared to exploit trust and confidence (on the part of the gullible). Similarly the remedy of a broken leg may involve more than repairing the bones – if it came about from systemic causes (dietary, environmental or attitudinal). At critical moments, reference may then be made to the patient's "will to live". This suggests an intriguing question in relation to any unconscious "death wish" of a civilization (Diamond, 2005; Saul, 1995).

Recovery: The focus of the G20 Summit recommendations is to "get the system working again". The possibility of "business as usual" would then be defined as successful recovery. Such an appreciation has been challenged by those who perceive the economic system, notably as promoted by the advocates of globalization, to have been in an inherently unhealthy condition for a long period. As with an individual faced with a health crisis, recovery does not necessarily mean enabling the person to indulge once again in heavy substance abuse (smoking, drinking, drugs, overeating, etc). "Recovery" then rather implies enabling the system – whatever its nature – to become more "healthy". The challenge here is that there is very little consensus on what is meant by "health". The health of the global economy has indeed been called into question with regard to what is effectively substance abuse (peak oil, water shortage, pollution, deforestation, etc)

Economic systems that pride themselves on being healthy may achieve this sentiment by ignoring the conditions of those exploited to sustain that belief. This may also be true of the intentional communities promoted as desirable alternatives to conventional models – most obviously in the case of "gated communities". The understandings of "health" offered by conventional medicine, and even by the World Health Organization, extend with difficulty into the psychosocial dimensions on which many alternative therapies focus (WHO, 2005). For WHO, "mental health" is defined as: *...not just the absence of mental disorder. It is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.*

Replicability: Again it would appear that remedies are not necessarily as reliable as most would like to expect. They are not necessarily associated with certainty. Curiously, with respect to the remedies being implemented for the economic system, frequent use is made of "hope" (whatever that could possibly mean to economists) with regard to the possibility of their success. Leadership is considered vital to "talking up" and sustaining hope (Obama, 2005).

In the case of health remedies, whether conventional or alternative, certainty is not on offer. Proofs regarding the efficacy of allopathic medication are not free of uncertainty as is so readily implied. They are based on statistical evidence on particular samples. Complex surgical operations and courses of treatment have only a certain statistical probability of being successful rather than disastrous – if not fatal.

The response to alternative therapies might also be seen in this light. Any success may well be entirely dependent on a placebo effect. The same approach may not work in the same way – whether with success or failure – in another context. Remedial strategies are not necessarily reliable or replicable when dealing with complex systems – whether the global financial system or the health of an individual. Clearly of interest is whether "allopathic" strategies are more replicable (reliable) than "homeopathic" – being possibly less dependent on contextual conditions. In the case of "homeopathic" strategies however, any higher degree of dependence on contextual conditions may enable other techniques to "work" successfully within that same context. The confidence engendered by the therapist (or leader) may be a determining factor in sustaining those conditions.

It could be considered extraordinary that the conventional commitment to quantitatively proven "allopathic" strategies is appropriately qualified by a degree of uncertainty. This is evident in the statistical reservations regarding any allopathic therapy – despite any deprecation of "homeopathic" alternatives. The fundamental weakness of this posture has been dramatically demonstrated by the widespread reliance of the financial community on the Gaussian copula as a means of handling investment uncertainty. It was indeed recognized as "proven" to work most of the time, however – as with any therapy – there are occasions and conditions when there is a known probability that it will not work. The subprime crisis emerged under such conditions.

The innovative formula of David X. Li with regard to the Gaussian copula is admirably described by Felix Salmon (2009) – or on the title page of the issue as *The Secret Formula that Destroyed Wall Street*. Arguably, whether in the case of allopathic or homeopathic models, Li's early qualification is relevant: *Very few people understand the essence of the model* (Whitehouse, 2005). Nevertheless, the Gaussian copula soon became such a universally accepted part of the world's financial vocabulary and methodology – as with the adoption of any "allopathic posture". But, as noted by Salmon:

... people used the Gaussian copula model to convince themselves they didn't have any risk at all, when in fact they just didn't have any risk 99 percent of the time. The other 1 percent of the time they blew up. Those explosions may have been rare, but they could destroy all previous gains, and then some.

In contrast with any gambling casino, where one loses 99% of the time, with a 1% probability of winning ("big"), using the Gaussian copula one could win 99% of the time – conveniently forgetting the probability of losing ("disastrously") just 1% of the time. This would seem to call for an adaptation of the well known statement by Abraham Lincoln: *You can fool all the people some of the time, and some of the people all the time, but you cannot fool all the people all the time.*

Sustaining A Healthy Flow: Confidence, Energy, Finance

As noted above, the financial crisis of 2008-2009 has resulted in **an extraordinary focus on what was otherwise held to be intangible** to the point of being neglected as irrelevant if not imaginary.

What is especially intriguing about this historical period is the degree of "dematerialization" of the challenge. Although a related trend towards faith-based governance might be set aside, despite its bloody consequences, the extent to which **understandings of the subtleties of faith, trust, confidence and value are now conflated in practice** merits careful consideration. This is especially the case when they are associated with (and engender) energy and movement embodied (or carried to some degree) by the tokens (monetary or otherwise) by which they are represented. With respect to the "confrontation" between "conventional" and "alternative", as framed metaphorically by "allopathic" and "homeopathic" worldviews, the dynamic nature of this intangible is acknowledged in an elusively convergent manner in the recognition:

- within an "allopathic" framework, despite any therapy, of the determining role of the "will to live" as it engenders and sustains any "life force" (however this may be framed)
- within a "homeopathic" framework, of some form of "life force" sustaining (and underlying) the health of the individual

Such recognitions do not however go as far as may be required by a subtler and more appropriate approach to either the health of the individual, of a community, of the environment, or of the global system. The challenge might be framed in terms of **understanding "flow" in psychosocial systems.**

- from an "eastern" perspective underlying the Chinese binary coding system above, namely the manner whereby the flow of *qi*, understood as energy flow, is engendered and sustained through the dynamics described
- from a "western" perspective, in notions of *energeia* or *élan vital* (vitalism). Curiously this is well-recognized in judgments on collectivities, whether clubs, communities, cities, or even countries, as being "alive" or "dead" – although with little ability to describe the flows involved. The continuing work on the psychology of flow at the individual level is indicative of the relevance of such insights to collectivities and the manner by which their sustainable development is in fact sustained, notably under conditions of crisis

Given the amount of research that has been undertaken into the dynamics of flow with respect to various technologies (fluid dynamics, magnetohydrodynamics, etc), there is clearly the possibility of **"mining" technologies for metaphors of relevance to flow in psychosocial systems**, especially those required to sustain the energy of a

knowledge society – as exemplified by nuclear fusion.

Global society might be held to be essentially characterized by **progressive dematerialization of flows** – epitomized by information travelling through the web, of which financial flows are but one form. But intimately associated, if not conflated, with these are the subtler flows of opinion, knowledge, insight and values – however they are brought to any focus in centres "of excellence", or otherwise, enabled or not by an emergent semantic web. Their implication becomes more apparent through the work of Maurice Yolles (2006 & 2008) on knowledge cybernetics and of Pierre Levy's distinction between six networks of collective intelligence (2009).

More intriguing however is the even more intimate and subtler flow associated with **attention as the scarcest of resources**, whether for an individual or collectively. This is most notably acknowledged in politics and marketing (especially of fashions). But more intriguing still is the nature of the thought associated with such attention – the primary concern of many disciplines of meditation. In this context, the question is the nature of the "energy" flow implied by the much cited adage of those disciplines, namely "energy follows thought". Perhaps not surprisingly this is the focus of a contribution to a newsletter focusing on business and politics (Bishop, 2008). But what is the "energy" that follows attention, and how is it related to the financial challenge as currently framed?

As implied by the arguments for "cognitive fusion", however, the challenge of any such attention flow is one of **fruitful self-reflexivity** (Hofstadter, 2007). This challenge is frequently highlighted through the metaphor of a mirror and of mirroring. Typically such mirroring raises and reinforces understandings of identity (whether individual or collective) – perhaps the most problematic challenge in the emerging global society.

Conclusion

There is a challenging degree of self-satisfaction amongst proponents of both conventional and alternative strategies – with little humility in relation to the unknown. This might be caricatured by the "allophobic" reactions of the constituency of the World Social Forum to the approaches promoted by the World Economic Forum – and by the "homophobic" reactions of the constituency of the latter to the approaches promoted by the former. Arguably they are both in a **metaphoric trap**. As stated by Geoffrey Vickers (1972) in defining such traps: *A trap is a function of the nature of the trapped.*

Whatever the dysfunctionalities to be detected in "homeopathic" strategies from an "allopathic" perspective, the metaphors through which the latter operate have long been widely disseminated by business schools and periodicals. This has not prevented the financial crisis of 2008-2009 whose possibility was seemingly undetectable through those frameworks, or given little credibility. Following the arguments of Susantha Goonatilake (1999), there is therefore a case for recognizing a degree of **metaphorical impoverishment** in the articulation of conventional strategies. In that sense, the spectrum of "homeopathic" therapies – as the epitome of traditional "civilizational knowledge" – merits exploration.

"Allopathic" and "homeopathic" metaphors may be seen as a form of **problem framing**. (Schon, 1973) has argued that the essential difficulties in social policy have more to do with problem setting than with problem solving. For him: *"the framing of problems often depends upon metaphors underlying the stories which generate problem setting and set the direction of problem solving."* Schon contrasts a housing problem where slum areas were defined as a "blight" or "disease" with one in which they were perceived as "natural communities". Using the medical metaphor the former justifies use of radical "surgery" to excise the blight – "allopathic style" – whereas the other calls for ways of enhancing the life of those communities. This would constitute a "homeopathic style". Both need to be considered.

It would seem that there is considerable possibility for future exploration of the dynamic relationship between **strategies having different mixes of "allopathic" and "homeopathic" elements** – where no one mix is then held to be viable and sustainable in its own right, but only as part of what amounts to a resonance hybrid based on the connectivity within the set of such possibilities. A sustainable democracy is then best understood as such a resonance hybrid.

It is however appropriate to ask whether the essentially "allopathic" perspectives envisaged should be complemented by a "homeopathic" perspective, as argued above – especially in the light of UNICEF's challenge to IMF a decade past (Mehrotra & Jolly, 2000; UNICEF, 1997). Will the transformation of the IMF, and its role in the financial system, embody any new insights, or will it be a case of "more of the same" – careful rearrangement of the deckchairs on RMS *Titanic*, with consequences to be anticipated?

China has provocatively intimated the possibility of shifting away from the dollar as the reserve currency, but it might be the case that that "currency" should be reframed as **a complementary currency in a manner more fundamentally related to confidence and energy** as discussed above, namely a "homeopathic" understanding of currency. Is it indeed from the understanding of Chinese culture that such a "currency" of confidence and psychosocial energy – *qi* – could best be articulated?

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