

CONSCIOUSNESS, CONTINUONS AND PORTALS

(Draft - 0.1)

Consciousness

The more conventional models of consciousness say that it exists within the person (usually the mind or even the brain), that the consciousness looks out, or observes, the universe from within that 'container' and that the person has some conscious control over their future (i.e. free will).

Any theory that starts with the assumption that the brain is where the consciousness of a person resides is making *several* assumptions, for which there appears to be no definitive evidence, e.g.:

1. that a person has a discrete, individual consciousness and that this is not dependent upon connection to the rest of the universe (or the potential relevance and extent of this connection is disregarded)
2. that *many* consciousness's must exist (because if it exists individually in one person, it must be assumed for all)
3. that the brain or physical 'person' is a *physical mechanism* or container for the consciousness. In essence, the brain is observed as a network of switches and paths, consciousness is assumed to exist in the brain so the conclusion is that the function of switches and paths must be what gives rise to consciousness. (This is what leads to the fallacy that any 'switch and path' mechanism, such as a computer, can have human-like consciousness if it's *powerful* enough)
4. that when the person ceases to exist all their consciousness ceases to exist (i.e. if the brain is 'dead' then the consciousness has nowhere to reside and therefore must also be 'dead')

(Note: 'Observation' is *sensory* acknowledgement of an occurrence that creates some kind of meaning)

The conjecture *here* is that consciousness is a *universal* phenomenon that exists *all over*, that any apparent *individual* consciousness is just a conceptual outline around a portion of that universal consciousness and that this outline is created by an observer. As this is just an outline, it can't *contain* anything literally, including memory (*at least in the conventional sense*).

'Consciousness' therefore is looked at in a similar way to mathematics – it doesn't 'exist' in one place; the person or mind is just a boundary around segments of continua. As far as *this* theory goes, the 'boundary' serves as a *portal*, through which continua pass.

Put another way, what *seems* to be individual consciousness does not exist in a *container*, but is just what's left when an observer excludes the rest of the universal consciousness.

As an example, from a less abstract perspective, *conventionally*, an emotion such as anger is seen to exist *within the system* of the person – they may be *seen* as angry, they *feel* angry and they would say that they *are* angry (like the anger is contained *within* them). The physiological changes occurring during anger, such as increased heart rate, sweating, tremors (from the adrenalin dump), etc., are understood as the effects of the person's *reaction* to an event, which can also include their own memory of a situation in which they feel threatened (for example).

So – *conventionally*, a person experiences an event, they judge it as a threat or an injustice and *then* they feel accordingly angry and a physiological response kicks in as a result.

It is proposed *here* that a phenomenon such as the one recognized as anger exists *anyway* - 'out there'. Occasionally, it passes through our conceptual 'person' outline and the *perception* of the observer (including the person themselves) is that this person is angry, because they now have anger within their outline. In a physical sense, they're *observing* their heart pounding, tunnel vision and other physical symptoms and *then* afterwards ascribing the meaning, 'anger', to it – i.e. they say their anger is *caused* by the event.

It is probably worth a reminder here that it is *not* proposed that anger, or any other emotion, exists as a *physical force* like something wicked that this way comes. What *is* proposed is that anger (and ultimately any component of consciousness) is a configuration of, and interactions between, phenomena that are happening anyway but which now happen to fall within the person outline, in a similar way to 'heat' falling within a 'thermostat' outline.

The 'out there' configuration can be segmented into many complex types which are going to be labelled 'continuons'. The *outline* also has other properties and is labelled a 'portal'. Whether a portal allows a particular continouon through depends upon the *variety* of the portal. The portal itself is comprised of more elementary portals, which allow the pass through, of continuons specific to themselves (e.g. round holes for round pegs) and these will be labelled *Continuon Filters* or C-Filters. Loosely speaking, the more C-Filters the portal has, the greater the variety of the portal and the higher its capacity for *consciousness*.

This approach was chosen to provide a *model* for understanding consciousness in a way that benefits understanding of organisational behaviour. One main goal is that an organisation devised using this model will be more aware, more adaptable and more capable of *viability* than more conventional models. Ultimately, the goal is to discover how close an organisational system can really become to being a coherent, **conscious entity**, such as a person.

Continuons

The concept of the 'continouon' was created to provide a convenient means of visualizing and manipulating several systems concepts better, including *variety*.

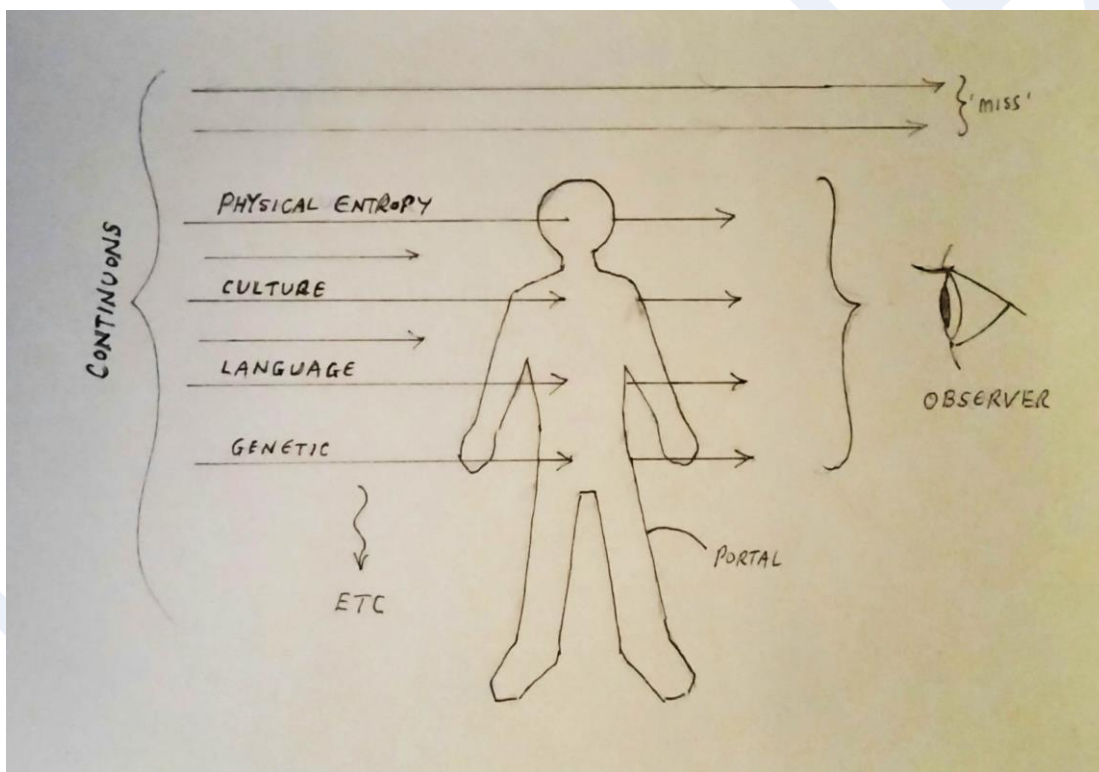
The term continouon is a originates from the word continuum. It is a hypothetical, elementary strand, or wave, or continuum, of information, metadata or configurational phenomena (or a combination), with no definite beginning or end. The number of continuons passing through a portal are what gives the portal

its *variety*. The greater the *variety* of continuons passing through a portal, the more capacity for consciousness the portal has.

A thermostat could be said to have only one continou passing through it (heat) and therefore has a variety of one. (This is just to keep it simple; e.g. in 'reality' it would have a few more continuons such as configuration of its physical matter)

A complex portal such as a living person has a large number of continuons passing through, including genetic coding, cultural information, etc. If this number is, say, one thousand, their horizontal variety would be one thousand. (Vertical variety refers to the complexity of a specific continou).

By comparison, the number of continuons passing through a chess playing, AI (artificial intelligence) machine would most likely be less than 10 – it is limited to recognising and responding to chess related *patterns* in the same way a thermostat is limited to recognising and responding to temperature.

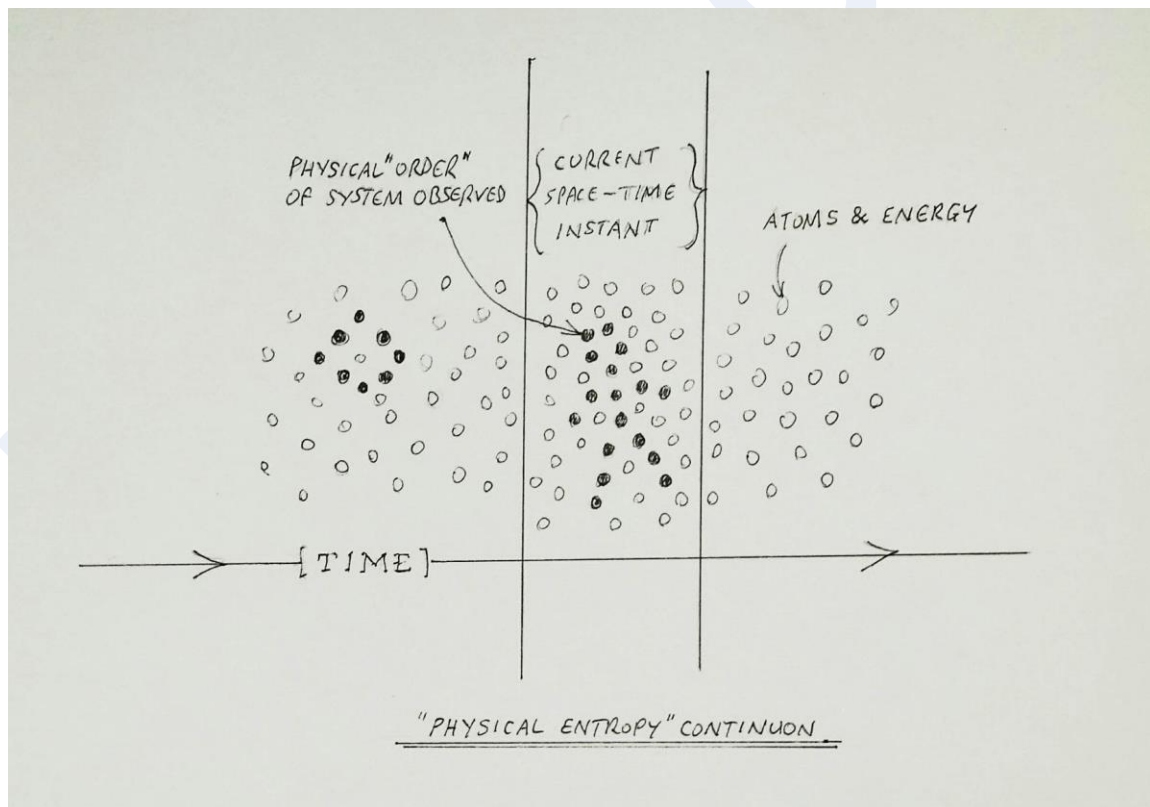


THE DIAGRAM SHOWS A SAMPLE NUMBER OF CONTIUONS PASSING THROUGH A 'PERSON' PORTAL (FOR A PERSON THE ACTUAL NUMBER WOULD BE A LOT HIGHER). EVERY PORTAL HAS A DIFFERENT NUMBER AND QUALITY, OR VARIETY, OF CONTINUONS PASSING THROUGH. THEY REACT WITH EACH OTHER IN DIFFERENT, BUT FORMULAIC, WAYS AS THEY PASS THROUGH THE PORTAL AND FOR A PERSON, THESE INTERACTIONS CAN BE COMPLEX. WHAT COMES OUT IS UNIQUE FOR EACH PORTAL, I.E. ITS INDIVIDUAL *IDENTITY*, AS IDENTIFIED (CREATED) BY THE OBSERVER.

Generally speaking, the higher the number of continuons passing through the portal (and the greater their complexity), the higher the *variety* and the greater the capacity for 'consciousness' the portal has. In this model, then, it is easy to see that a machine AI still has a long way to go before it achieves anything like the level of awareness of a human or even a simple animal. No current machine has anywhere near the variety that a person has, and increasing computational power does not equal increasing the *variety*.

The portal modulates the continuum. Some continuons may change only slightly, some may bypass the portal altogether. The portal attenuates or amplifies the contiuous (but not beyond the limits of its C-Filters). What is left, coming through the portal, is the unique identity of the organisational system. A *person, or their identity*, therefore, is a *synthesis of continuons*.

By way of example - a 'physical continuum': A person is observed as an outline around a *set* of physical matter, but the outline will contain different matter as time goes on. E.g. parts may be replaced, but it will still be the same *person*. The *order* of its physicality is labelled the *entropy continuum*. It may help to think of Theseus's Ship Paradox – it's still the 'same' ship even after every single component has been replaced over time.



THE DIAGRAM SHOWS A PHYSICAL ENTROPY CONTINUUM. THIS IS THE INSTANT IN SPACE-TIME WHERE AN OBSERVER PUTS A PERSON SHAPED OUTLINE AROUND PHYSICAL MATTER, I.E. IDENTIFIES A PERSON AS *SEPARATE* FROM THE REST OF THE UNIVERSE. OVER TIME (INDICATED BY THE VERTICAL BARS, MOVING TO THE RIGHT) THE OUTLINE OF THE PERSON MAY BE

AROUND DIFFERENT PHYSICAL MATTER, YET THE PERSON WILL STILL BE IDENTIFIED AS THE SAME PERSON. IT IS A KEY CONCEPT THAT IT IS *CONTINUITY* THAT ALLOWS THE PERSON TO BE THE *SAME* PERSON. ONE VERY SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATION HERE IS THAT ONCE CONTINUITY IS LOST, SO IS THE IDENTIFIED 'THING' – IT MAY LOOK THE SAME BUT CANNOT, RATIONALLY, BE THE *SAME* THING.

Feedback may occur through the same portal, which *appears* to influence its 'behaviour'. Feedback will be dealt with in more detail subsequently.

There is still a lot of work to do on identifying *classes* of continuons and their properties. It's early days, but there seem to be a small number of super-classes:

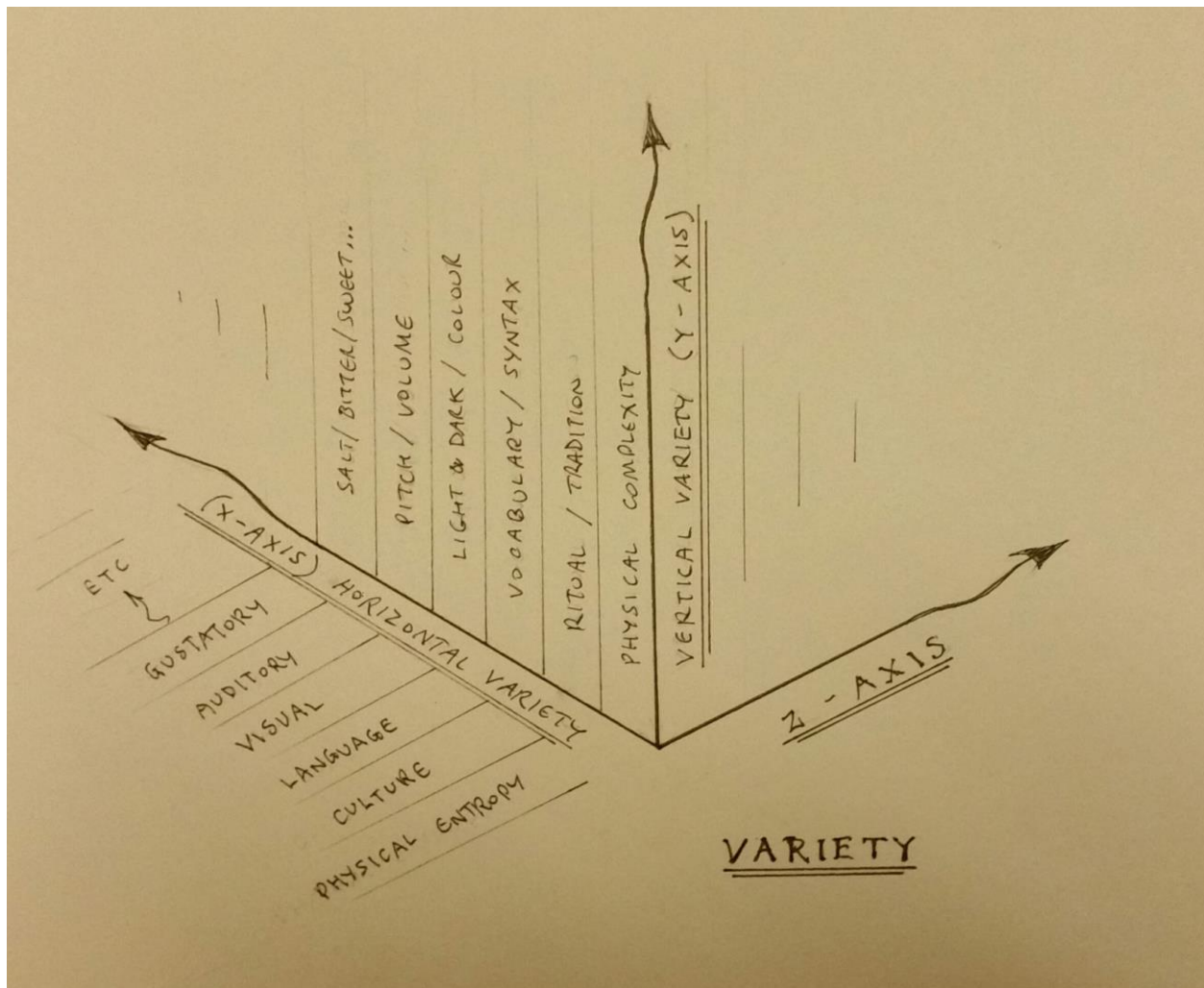
- **Signifier Continuum:** 'signifier' is a term that originates in the semiotics definition. In our model, it means the method by which meaning (the *signified*) is transported down a continuum. For example, culture is a signifier continuum and traditions such as rituals are the *signified*.
- **Entropic Continuum:** this pertains to the arrangement of physical matter or energy over the course of time. Any physically manifested system will have this continuum.
- **Feedback Continuum:** Just speculation at the moment - these seem vaguely, hypothetically possible but would mean that feedback is there before and after an event has happened to a system. I.e. it just becomes known about when everything else is eliminated.

Variety

The definition of 'variety', originates with that described by W Ross Ashby ('*the total number of states of a system*'), although the meaning here is slightly subverted to focus on the number and qualities of continuons passing through a portal.

A system can increase its *breadth* of variety (its 'X axis' or horizontal variety), by increasing its number of signifier continuons and can increase its *depth* of variety (its 'Y axis' or vertical variety), by increasing an individual continuum's *complexity*. (This leads to the possibility of a 'Z' axis, which may relate to depth of *meaning*, which is possibly how each of the continuons relate to each other (i.e. *context*). Within this conceptual three-dimensional space exists 'consciousness').

For example, adding the capability to detect movement to a thermostat (a simple 'eye') could elevate a thermostat to the level of a rudimentary burglar alarm. In effect, this system now has doubled its *horizontal* variety. If the thermostat was improved to detect a greater range of temperatures, or to a finer degree, its *vertical* variety would be increased. As per Ashby, in effect, the system would have more potential states.



THE DIAGRAM SHOWS THE BASIC CONCEPT OF HORIZONTAL AND VERTICAL VARIETY. IN A HUMAN, THE VARIETY WOULD BE MORE GRANULAR AND EXTEND A LOT FURTHER IN ALL DIRECTIONS. AS PER ASHBY, "THE OBSERVER AND HIS POWERS OF DISCRIMINATION MAY HAVE TO BE SPECIFIED IF THE VARIETY IS TO BE WELL DEFINED".

Portals

As far as this theory goes a *portal* is just a hoop around continuons. The configuration of the hoop is decided by the observation.

A portal contains at least one Continuum Filter (C-Filter for convenience). In effect, a C-Filter is a type of hole that lets a corresponding continuum, or part of a continuum, through (to the observer). A continuum will bypass a portal if there's no corresponding C-Filter to funnel it.

General Observations

The difference between 'continuum theory' and other models:

Systems Theory is extremely practical and enlightening in all sorts of ways, but the problem with such a subject is that it's linked to *everything*. Managing all that information and abstract theory, let alone communicating it meaningfully, is extremely frustrating. It is excruciating to know *why* an organisation is failing systemically but not have a snappy soundbite explanation that the management will understand, let alone act upon.

In Systems Thinking, it is usual to attenuate the information from the universal system and look at *particular systems of interest*, and label or categorise them somehow, but still recognise these can only be understood in terms of the whole.

Continuums, Portals, etc, are just another way of doing this. However, the true proof of their worth is whether they can be used for explaining complex systems theories more effectively, provide practical solutions to practical problems and build models that have improved *predictive capability*.

A typical model is that information is *contained* within the brain, for example. Continuum theory treats the brain not as a *container* but as a gateway or filter – as with other parts of an organic system, the brain is just configured to have some awareness of some information that's passing through (including feedback).

This 'pass through' idea helps manage the concept that brains don't really seem to get 'full'. Here, an 'improved memory' is seen as just an expansion of the portal's variety and more efficient routing of information and not just as a container (that, logically, would fill up). **The pass-through idea also helps manage the proposition that consciousness cannot exist isolated from the rest of the universe.**

Portals are *anything* with sensory capability – this includes such things as a simple thermostat, a business or a person. The effect is a virtually infinite number of continuums being bounced around – '**The Cacophony**'. It is the *portal* that filters most of this out and because this gives it 'order', it begins to take on 'meaning', e.g. as a 'person'. This has similarities to the concept of a Boltzman Brainⁱ.

I.e. ultimately, it is the observation of the portal that determines its level of consciousness. A person is a filtration, or snapshot, of continuums.

Continuum theory helps explain synchronicity more easily than other explanations. A person is not simply a container of discrete information – similar ideas occur simultaneously on different sides of the world with no immediately obvious connection.

A phenomenon such as language (in our terms a *continuum*) has no known beginning or end yet the mind *seems* to be aware of it. The mind, in the conventional sense, is *finite*. Conceptually then, language comes from the past, passes through a mind but continues to exist long after a mind has ceased to be (in a physical sense).

Conclusion

The model of Continuons, Portals and C-Filters is, very basically, just a very trimmed down version of *some* general systems theories, to simplify the modelling of more complex theories. This will hopefully help simplify inquiries into diverse areas such as consciousness, organisational control, etc.

However, the real test is whether this can deliver anything *practical*, hence the proposed creation or, more accurately, *realisation*, of a synthetic persona – an organisational system personified.

ⁱ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boltzmann_brain