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ON THE PHILOSOPHY OF CO-ACTIVITY AND BEHAVIOUR WITHIN SOCIAL STRUCTURES

The article presents the structure of the system of co-activity and the specific co-actors involved in the overall result achieved by an organization. Overall responsibility and co-active environment are also reviewed. The basic conclusion drawn is that our present success or failure is largely determined in our past. Our behaviour at present, therefore, underlies our future past.

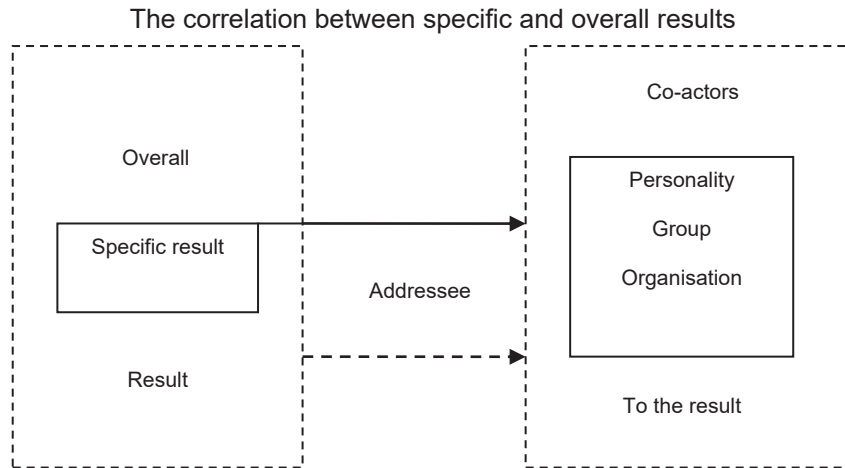
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From a merely human perspective, everybody is pleased when he achieves his essential goals just as everybody is not particularly pleased when this is not the case. In both cases however, the ultimate result we are trying to achieve is influenced by a number of factors. Often, achieved success depends not so much on the qualities of the individual but on the favourable confluence of a series of events. In some cases, even apparently good professional qualities and character traits do not result in achieving the set goal. This is also the consequence of other factors which go beyond human potential. And whereas in the case of a positive outcome we rarely stop to think about other factors which have had their beneficial impact on developments and tend to explain it all with the personal qualities of those who succeed, in the latter situation few people will abstain from analyzing the impact of external factors. "You may often hate people because of your suspicion that they are the ones to blame for an evil that has afflicted you or for a missed opportunity. The amount of injustice we commit because of similar thoughts is not insignificant. But if we only consider as good or evil what depends on us ourselves, there will be no reason to blame God or start a war against a person"¹. The deep philosophy embedded in this quote from Marcus Aurelius is that of co-activity, i.e. the view that an ultimate result is a function of multiple factors. A good (positive) assessment or a bad (negative) one are only the subjective perception of that result, in which emotion often interferes and prevents us from identifying and analyzing the complex of causes underlying a specific result. "Some co-act in one way, others co-act in a different way, even those grumbling against a development, trying to resist or prevent it are in a sense co-actors. The Universe needs such people as well."² In other words, we all contribute to developments which we subjectively assess positively or negatively – some of us do so deliberately and consistently, others – without even being aware of that. Therefore, each specific result attained by an individual, a group of people, or an organization, might be viewed as an overall one, from the perspective of co-activity. The correlation between a specific and an overall result might be represented in the following way:

¹ *Aurelius, M.* To Himself (Bulg. transl. ed.). Sofia: Narodna kultura, 1986, p. 74.

² *Ibid.*, p. 74.

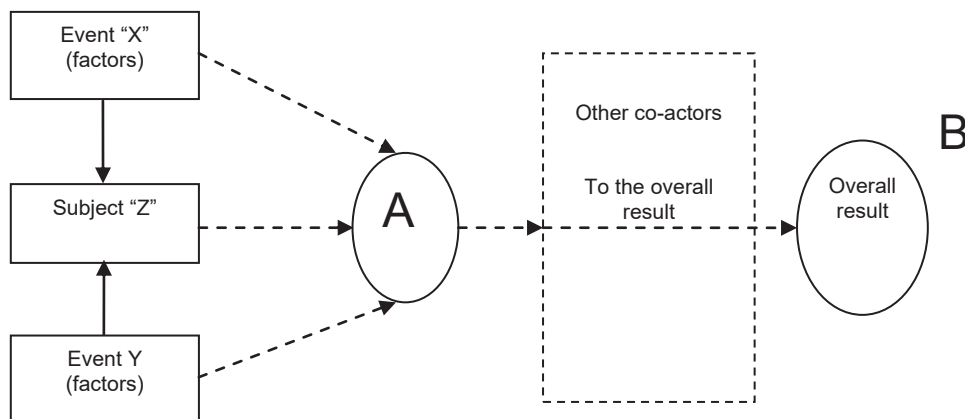
Chart 1



As a matter of fact, a specific result is an overall one, when taking into consideration not only parties directly interested in it but also the co-actors who have exerted some positive or negative impact leading to that particular result. The open attitude of stakeholders to the specific result provides evidence for observation and assessment. In contrast, the actions of co-actors might be covert or manipulative, as well as virtually and morally supportive to the pursuit of the desired result. Even a past event might prove to be a co-actor to the current result without being directly related to it. These ideas can be illustrated with the next chart 2.

Chart 2

The correlation between different events and subjects in terms of overall results



In chart 2, A is the point of intersection between subject Z's behaviour related to result B and events X and Y, which are not related to each other, yet each both of them are individually related to subject Z. The overall result B is a function of the behaviour of subject Z and the other co-actors, influenced by the combined effect of events (factors) X and Y. Thus two seemingly separate events might prove to be co-actors to the achievement of the overall result.

The assessment of results reveals that a number of factors influenced by the behaviour of surrounding people, groups or institutions, has contributed to the achievement of these results. In addition to the individual SELF, which underlies our active behaviour aimed at achieving our goals, some instances of intentional or unintentional hindrance might be identified, as well as passive behaviour or explicit inactivity, or even cases in which separate entities not interested in our goals might influence our behaviour merely with their existence. Specific results are therefore a function of multiple co-actors. Some of the factors affecting results might be:

- the individual with his behaviour of one being directly interested in the achievement of the goals;
- entities with active behaviour that are directly interested in preventing the goal from being achieved;
- entities with passive behaviour that are directly interested in preventing the goal from being achieved;
- entities with passive behaviour that are indirectly interested in preventing the goal from being achieved;
- stakeholders contributing to the achievement of goals;
- entities, disinterested in the personality or his goals, who can affect the behaviour of an individual merely with their existence, i.e. consciously or subconsciously they are part of the motives affecting the behaviour of the individual.

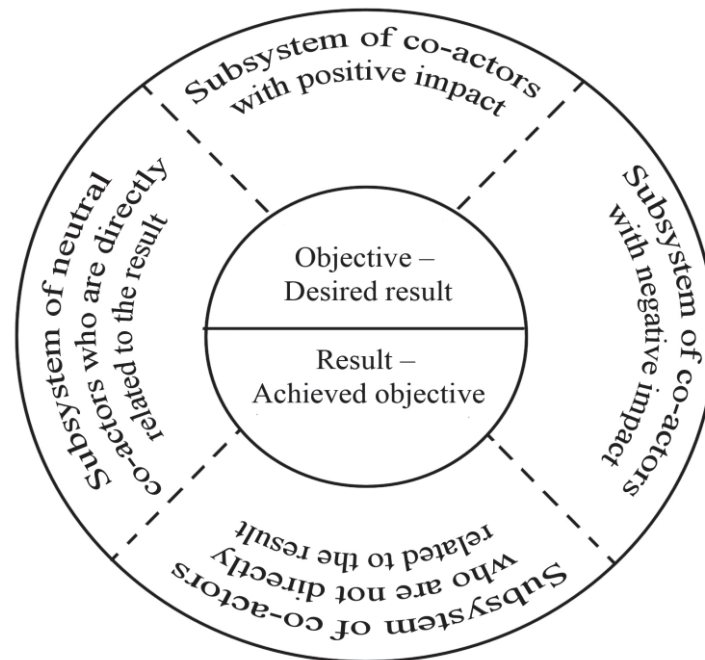
Therefore, by identifying all possible co-actors and prudently arranging their systematic involvement as the mode of activity or inactivity may require, we could design a system of the structure of co-activity (see the Figure). Within that system, the following major subsystems of co-actors might be defined:

- the subsystem of co-actors with positive impact;
- the subsystem of co-actors with negative impact;
- the subsystem of neutral co-actors who are related to the result;
- the subsystem of co-actors who are not directly related to the result.

The structure of the system of co-activity might be presented in the following way:

Figure

The structure of the system of co-activity



The simplest way to illustrate the system of co-activity is to design a provisionally called technological task sheet of things to accomplish during the day. Our report in the evening might show some positive or negative deviations, i.e. tasks we accomplished during the day and ones we did not. We will probably have accomplished some tasks not included in our technological task sheet due to favourable opportunities arising to do so. If we analyse the causes for success, failure or newly emerged opportunities, our minds will jump to situations, events, and facts related to the past and the present, ones which we were totally unaware of when designing the technological task sheet, but which have to a smaller or greater degree contributed to the achievement of the overall result at the end of the day. Our analysis might focus on situations, events and personalities that have come to our minds by chance, yet they all will have affected our activity, our reactions being more or less motivated by them. Similarly, they may also prove to be co-actors in the achievement of the overall result. Such provisionally called technological task sheets might be designed according to the tasks and objectives to be accomplished within a week, a month, or even a year. Such task sheets might be designed not only for individuals, but also for groups, teams and organisations.

A careful analysis might help us establish various subsystems' elements within the system of co-activity. What is more, we might be totally unaware of the impact some of them have on the overall result. An insight into the attitude of co-actors to the overall result reveals that their attitude has largely been provoked by our past behaviour, although there might be some deviations. In general, we could conclude that personalities, groups and organisations prepare their future co-activity through their behaviour at present. Therefore what a future co-activity will be like largely depends on the way we react to currently arising situations.

The analysis of co-activity might provide the answer to another frequently raised question, i.e. How come I/we did my/our best, yet I/we did not achieve the desired result? Clearly, some omissions and deficiencies in our past behaviour largely define the structural elements of the present system of co-activity and thus prevent us from achieving the desired results.

The next table might be helpful in the analysis of co-activity.

Table

Co-actors in the achievement of the overall result within an organisation

With positive impact	With negative impact	Neutral, but related to the overall result	Neutral, not related to the overall result, yet having an impact on it
1. Personal or group interests (stakes) 2. Other stakeholders who share the same goals 3. Favourable confluence of external factors beyond our control 4. Influencing and changing external factors within our control 5. Influencing and changing internal factors within our control	1. Separate individuals not sharing the goals 2. Groups expressing negative attitude to the goals 3. Unfavourable concurrence of external factors beyond our control 4. Active favorability on behalf of individuals or groups 5. Unstable behaviour of individuals and groups within the organisation	1. Separate individuals related to the organisation 2. Groups related to the organisation 3. Institutions whose authority affects the performance of the organisation 4. Partners 5. Separate individuals or small groups within the organisation	1. Individuals 2. Groups 3. Other organisations 4. Institutions 5. Other entities <i>Example:</i> A chemical plant polluting the environment. This has its impact on the employees in a shoe factory – increased staff turnover – deteriorated quality. Although both entities are not competitors or directly related, the existence of the chemical plant is in fact a co-actor to the overall result achieved by the shoe factory.

Analysis of co-activity requires our deep understanding of the fact that our present behaviour determines the character of our co-active environment in the future. That environment, combined with the potential of the individual, group, team, or organisation will determine the anticipated overall result in the future. And just as the behaviour of both good and bad characters is included in the overall

assessment of a novel or movie, the overall result achieved includes all co-actors, those who are committed to it and those who are not, as well as those who pose hindrances or are indifferent to it.

The behaviour of the human factor is a function of the legal framework, as well. The adoption of laws at present does not necessarily imply an immediate change in behaviour. Co-activity of social environment, family, etc. continues to have its impact in the course of time, in spite of the active legal framework. Formal activities may therefore differ from the informal truths for some part of society – individuals, organised groups, etc. An example here could be the notorious ‘mob period’ in our latest history, characterized by a blatant violation of laws and making the most of the omissions in the legal framework, which is also an element of the co-activity system. Although burdened with a number of negative aspects, that mob period performed an essential preventive function. That function is attributed to its specific role as a ‘social sanitarian’, for it deprived enthusiastic but unprepared entrepreneurs of their businesses and thus spared them bankruptcies as well as social and economic dramas of a more complex nature.

Naturally, the time span of a similar approach for accumulation of wealth is short and it is already undergoing decline and transformation. Yet, ultimately, we all co-act in a different way and to a different degree in what our society is at present. If a managerial result is generally the product of a managerial decision, the overall result in a social system, built of specific social structures, is the function of the behaviour of all its structural components, regardless of the potential or the course of action. Besides, the social potential of the social system is related to the behaviour of all co-actors at all levels. This potential decreases with divergent and conflicting actions and increases when there is unity and coordination of behaviour. Figuratively, that potential could be presented as the aggregate value of the overall result achieved by all social structures within the social system, i.e.:

- the overall result for the individual;
- the overall result for the group (team);
- the overall result for the organisation, etc.

Overall results decrease when there are conflicts in co-actors’ behaviour, which also leads to reduced social potential of the social system as a whole. This is directly related to the behaviour of individuals and the relations within social structures, as well as to the patterns of behaviour, loaded with more negative potential.

Conflicts in behaviour might be exhibited by any social structure. Those might be related to managerial decisions, political affiliation, the financial status of an individual, shared moral values, etc. Special attention should be paid to:

1. Co-activity related to the consolidation around major national objectives. There are two basic moments here – in the first place, who and how will present these objectives to society, and secondly, how to encourage the adoption of those objectives. The behaviour of political leaders in the past is of crucial importance. Random involvement of any individuals in politics is not only dangerous, but may also give rise

to various conflicts and a war of discrediting among opponents, which will not only shift the focus of public attention from the consolidation around major national objectives, but will also prevent those objectives from being clearly defined. Thus the co-active environment will prove to be unfavourable to the establishment of a uniform national policy and the consolidation of society around its objectives.

2. Co-activity related to various national policies conducted within the economy. This is, in fact, related to an extremely important issue – that of conflicts among institutions. Those could be arising due to an improperly established institutional structure as well as due to entities exercising their power as separate institutions. Due to exhibited conflicts in behaviour the overall result achieved will be reduced.

3. Co-activity related to the implementation of crucial managerial decisions. In this case, the entity that is primarily affected is the authority responsible for developing and taking the decisions. Even a decision which has been properly developed and adopted with consensus may fail to work. There might be different reasons behind this, for example, conflicts in the behaviour of those imposing the decision or the people engaged with the implementation of the decision. Thus the overall result will be far from the expected, which implies an unfavourable co-active environment.

A crucial element in the three situations considered above is the present behaviour of the individual or the group (team), determined some time ago back in the past, when specific behavioral patterns established the co-active environment. This means that presently experienced negatives might be the result of wrongly conducted national policies decades ago. Organisations and companies might find themselves currently isolated due to improper behaviour in the past, and an individual might be baffled why he can not succeed despite all his effort and hard work.

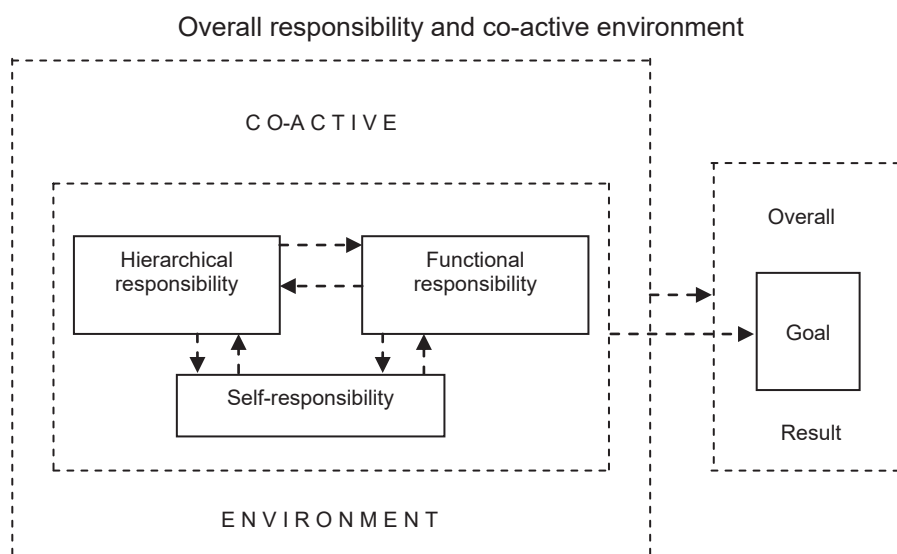
The fact that we all contribute to the overall result, some intentionally and others not, throws different light on the issue of responsibility and guilt. And while the issue of responsibility is more easily defined, it is a totally different situation with guilt. There is no case study in the combination 'responsible – guilty', as opposed to the combinations 'responsible – not-guilty' and 'guilty – not-responsible'. The question arising naturally is whether the philosophy of co-activity could be applied here so as to change specific situations by accounting for the complexity of the overall result.

All social systems are made up of hierarchical structures. Provided that those operate within defined parameters, the problem of responsibility is irrelevant. Any deviation from these parameters confronts various structural levels with the problem of real plan responsibility, i.e. potential responsibility is transformed into a real one and specific entities are identified as being responsible. The parameters within which social structures are expected to perform are determined by the specific legal framework. That legal framework must be designed in a way which helps functionally solve specific conflicts among civil society individuals or groups, as well as conflicts related to internal and external security.

Legal frameworks governing the development of the managerial process and the administration of managerial decisions are just as important. If we consider a legal framework to be the formal environment it will be possible to define any deviations from it as informal truths which are a specific reaction to a specific aspect on behalf of individuals or groups. Those processes might be of constructive or destructive nature and are in this sense part of the co-active environment contributing to the overall result. In fact, such behaviour is provoked by the attitude to the legal framework. There are some entities which are responsible for the compliance with its regulations. The fault is therefore both in those who react against separate aspects of the legal framework and in those who bear the responsibility for the implementation of these regulations.

Responsibility about people is within the authority of hierarchical power, while responsibility about activities lies within the authority of functional power. Self-responsibility, too, has a role to play in the achievement of final goals. In essence, it is responsibility for the behaviour of any individual in his private, professional or social life. This is the result of multiple factors – basic values, social environment, general knowledge, corporate culture, professional skills, etc. What is more, self-responsibility is crucial both to hierarchical and functional responsibility. The three of them constitute the overall responsibility related to the overall result.

Chart 3



Self-responsibility is related to self-awareness and the moral values shared by the individual. At the same time, it is correlated to hierarchical and functional responsibility and is an important prerequisite for the implementation of goals and the achievement of overall results.

It is not uncommon to blame on the past unsatisfactory results attained at present. This is quite explicit in mandate-defined thinking and behaviour. Should a mandate prove to be insufficient for implementing the commitments made, there is nothing one can do about the unsatisfactory overall result but attribute it to some causes in the past. This is, in fact, recognition of co-activity as a philosophy, although it is a totally different matter to what extent this corresponds to the truth behind the facts. When there are positive results at present, however, a reference to previous mandates will rarely be made, unless those too were the mandates of the same party. A mandate-related explanation is a brilliant example how a present result is the consequence of the positive and negative aspects of the past, i.e. previous mandates, plus the initiatives and the results implemented during the present mandate. Quite often in order to serve some subjective interests or political affiliations the past is given a distorted description, the present is exaggerated, and the future is described idealistically. Regardless of subjective judgments, though, any result achieved at a particular point in the socio-economic system is clearly defined and specific, therefore it is the overall result of the co-active environment, the potential of the government, and the real foundation for further development. Therefore, blame shifting is only a temporary solution for shifting the focus of attention from current issues and providing an excuse for failures. If negatives are only attributed to a previous mandate, then it would make sense to ask what the behaviour of the present government was during that mandate in its role of an opposing party.

Co-active environment is directly related to social potential. When the latter is characterized by conflicts and divergent interests, the overall result as a consequence of all positive and negative aspects of the social system will not correspond to its actual social potential. This means that a significant volume of social energy will be consumed for settling arising problems and conflicts. What is more, quite often this will lead to achieving no specific result, yet both time and resources will be wasted. And it all comes down to the behaviour of certain individuals or groups who are in a pursuit of accomplishing goals which dramatically exceed their potential. Quite naturally, such behaviour is accompanied by negative social phenomena like corruption, organized crime, political instability, etc. In this case the issue of responsibility and guilt is especially important, because if those two concepts fail to be clearly defined in due time, this will lead to depleted social potential. If those processes are not subject to control or fail to be regulated within reasonable limits, it will be no surprise if the bigger part of social potential has to be consumed in dealing with the consequences of a similar behaviour.

As a rule, co-active environment is to a greater extent related to the past, i.e. to behaviour which has already been implemented. This means that a careful analysis and assessment of the performance of present co-active environment will make it possible to identify opportunities for activating compensatory mechanisms for reducing possible negative influence and boost its positive impact on the overall result. If left unregulated, the environment can be penetrated by divergent activities and thus permit various impacts on current behaviour. Such regulatory mechanism might be measures

taken to settle conflicts which have arisen in the past or to alleviate the negative consequences of decisions which have already been put into practice.

As for operational order relations with the social environment, they should always be carefully tailored and balanced. Under certain conditions compromising might be recommended as a strategic behaviour, and in some cases even an explicit readiness to step back might be appropriate, as in the course of time these might prove to be more beneficial than the consistent implementation of the policy set in advance.

Applying flexible mechanisms to influence the present social environment or appropriate mechanisms to compensate for demonstrated behaviour can considerably affect the achievement of a better overall result. This, however, requires excellent command of communication mechanisms and a high level of ethical commitment. The inability to bear other people's success is a serious step towards establishing a negative co-active environment. Should a similar behaviour become the norm, the relations governing social structures will be penetrated by envy and hostility which will not only curb the willingness to communicate and cooperate but will also provoke negative trends such as fraud, unfair competition, active favorability, etc. All these will deteriorate the social climate and weaken the potential of social structures.

Co-active environment is characterized by divergent actions. It cannot be made subject to control, rather appropriate compensatory mechanisms need to be applied in order to reduce negative influences and increase positive impacts. Nor should market competition affect the balance of relations among economic entities when they fit within the legal framework. As for personalities and groups, it comes down to values, moral and conscience, terminology which comes to our mind as often as we find ourselves involved in conflicts with the social environment which are not our fault. And just as there is no court for moral values, there is no court for co-activity. It is all a matter of a retrospective look and analysis of what has contributed and what has been an obstacle to achieving the overall result.

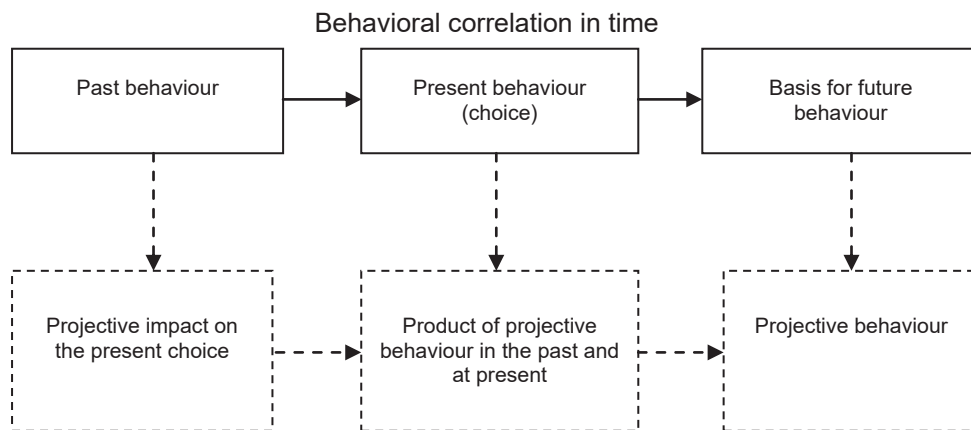
Naturally, the philosophy of co-activity excludes violation of laws or disregarding the established legal framework for behaviour, i.e. cases in which the court is authorized to intervene. Our concern is rather about behavioral correlations within social structures. They really cannot fit into a legal framework, but depend on conscience and professional ethics. Our analysis as to what has contributed and what has been an obstacle to achieving the overall result would not be exhaustive if we failed to take into account what motivated a particular behaviour at a subconscious level. This is what we will certainly find out when no further obvious causes for achieving the overall result can be identified.

Co-activity is a behavioral philosophy which explains why present effort or personal qualities and abilities alone are not sufficient for achieving a satisfactory overall result. This is further confirmed by the observation that excellent personal qualities and individual skills do not guarantee efficient team work, i.e. an individual might prove to be inefficient in a team despite his high personal potential. Therefore developing good teamwork skills is one of the prerequisites for establishing a favourable co-active environment through appropriate behaviour at present.

People face different situations when a choice is to be made. That choice is, in essence, the behaviour chosen for the particular situation and is affected by multiple factors – personal, collective, tactical, strategic, etc. In fact, the choice we make at present projects our behaviour in the future. This is due to the fact that the activities which are currently being fulfilled lay the foundations for the future which is based on previous accomplishments. From this point of view, the choice we make at present is a product of a past behaviour and the present environment with its characteristics. Thus our current choice, on the one hand, determines some future behaviour, while on the other hand it is a product of the co-active environment. This is in tune with one of the basic tenets in psychoanalysis, i.e. that any behaviour is projective. Therefore our past behaviour has its projective impact on our current choices while our current choices project our behaviour in the future. It should be noted that any choice is based not only on the values shared by the individual but also on the duration and intensity of influence exerted by various parameters of the social environment – political, economic, social, cultural, etc. Those, in fact, constitute the co-active environment.

The correlation of past behaviour, current choices and projective behaviour could be presented in the following way:

Chart 4



The logic of behavioral correlation in time suggests that contingencies are largely excluded and causality must be easy to recognize throughout the achievement of the ultimate (overall) result. To put it in another way, any incidental behaviour is only apparently incidental while in fact it is the product of a specific pattern.

In conclusion, we could summarise the following: The philosophy of co-activity demands that we say STOP and consider our behaviour at present, as well as provide a clear answer to the question why we fail or succeed. Our failures and successes are largely determined by our past. What is more, we should bear in mind that our future past is determined by our behaviour at present.

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