

## CHAPTER 2: PERCEPTIONS, ASSUMPTIONS, AND HARMONIC VIBRANCY

In Chapter 1, we looked at the five relationships: self, other, group, nature, and spirit, through which people experience harmonic vibrancy, as well as three circles or levels of harmonic vibrancy: low, medium, and high. We saw that people experience quite different realities in each of the three circles. Now I want to explore how our *perceptions* of reality influence which circle we find ourselves in.

We examined three distinct, though interrelated, perceptions of reality in the context of the relationship to nature. These are represented in the Three Circles of Harmonic Vibrancy graphic (Figure 7 on p. 35) as the possibility of a new house, the development of a new house, and the concrete manifestation of the house as a solid, fixed object. The different experiences of these three, equally real, versions of “house” we categorized as high vibrancy (possibility, development, and things), medium vibrancy (development and things) and low vibrancy (things). Each level of higher vibrancy works with the lower level of reality and the next level, both-and. This continuum, combined with those of the other four relationships in the graphic, captures an interesting and important phenomenon; as our perception of reality expands from seeing only the things that currently exist to including processes of development to working in the possibility realm, our experience of reality also expands, from low to medium to high harmonic vibrancy, and from scarcity to abundance.

In their national bestseller, *The Art of Possibility*, Ben and Rosamund Stone Zander tell a story that neatly highlights this power of perception:

A shoe factory sends two marketing scouts to a region of Africa to study the prospects for expanding business. One sends back a telegram saying, ‘SITUATION HOPELESS STOP NO ONE WEARS SHOES.’ The other writes back triumphantly, ‘GLORIOUS BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY STOP THEY HAVE NO SHOES.’<sup>27</sup>

We can easily see that these two different perspectives on the same situation have led the two scouts to make radically different assumptions about the market opportunity, each with quite different implications for how the shoe company could proceed. We don’t know for sure that diving into a new market on the advice of the second scout would lead to huge sales of shoes in the region, but we do know that following the instinct of the first scout that there was no point in entering that market would produce no sales at all. This story brings us back to the first principle of scarcity and abundance from the end of Chapter 1, which is: *groups that start with an assumption of scarcity experience mostly scarcity and low harmonic vibrancy, and groups that start with an assumption of abundance experience mostly abundance and high harmonic vibrancy.* So, our perceptions of reality shape our assumptions of what is possible, and our assumptions influence the reality we experience. Let’s explore in more detail how this can be so.

## **POSSIBILITY, DEVELOPMENT, THINGS: LIGHT, MOTION, MATTER**

First, I want to delve into the three basic perceptions of reality we have identified. In Chapter 1, I labeled these “possibility,” “development,” and “things” as a way of identifying the central focus of each perspective. It is important to remember that these are “only” perceptions of reality, not reality itself. All three of these aspects of reality are always present, whether or not we perceive them. Yet, it is human nature to see what we expect to see and miss those aspects of reality we are not looking for.

To become more aware of our ways of perceiving can be challenging, especially when we are in the midst of the perception. We can meet this challenge, however, by developing awareness of how we tend to experience the differences among them. In fact, each of these three perspectives tends to come with a distinctive sensation, which we can relate to as a familiar experience of a fundamental quality of the physical world: light (possibility), motion (development), and matter (things). By recognizing these differences among the three ways of perceiving, we can become more aware of our perception in a particular situation and more aware of the assumptions we may be making on the basis of that perception. Once again, I will draw on my many conversations to show how what I am saying is really just stuff you already know.

### **Possibility-Light**

You experience possibility, all around you, all of the time. You may see possibility daily in mundane things such as what you will do when you wake up in the morning, what you want for breakfast, or how you will get to work, as well as in important things like how you will engage with your family or your co-workers or your school mates. You also see possibility in the creative moments of your life, when perhaps you have surprised yourself with gifts of unexpected inspiration.

When you are in that place of inspiration and seeing possibility all over the place, other people notice it, often in a particular way: “I can see the light in your eyes,” or “you were glowing today.” Just as in the natural world, light-energy is the source of all possibility, so in the human arena we associate light with the realm of infinite possibility, from which everything flows. When you or others notice this sense of light, you know your perception of reality is in that possibility realm. And when you are in that light-possibility realm, the assumptions you make tend to favor the idea that things will work out well, precisely because there is so much possibility for them to do so. This is how you feel when you see the possibility that you can do something you’ve never done before—learn a new skill or have an experience you never thought you could have. The energy flows and you decide to go for it.

A woman in Germany told me a story about how she had experienced this sense of potential with a new group of people. “Last year, as I began to form a sports team, I could see clearly how we might perform together. It was very exciting.” Have you had the experience of being able to see, somewhere in the future, a group of people achieving certain outcomes and performing together, long before they ever came together? How did you know that it

would work? Again and again people have assured me, “You can just see the potential. You can feel it.”

In my conversations I like to draw out this experience by asking if people have ever hired someone to work for them. Many say yes. “What I want to understand,” I say, “is how you decided the person you hired could do the job.” A woman in a lecture in Mexico City addressed this quite logically by saying, “There are basically two different likely cases here. In one case, I hire someone who is already doing a similar job elsewhere. In the other case, I hire a person who has never done anything like this before.” Other folks in the group nodded their heads, telling me that this is typical of their experience. So I dove into the second case with a question I ask in every conversation, “How do you know someone will be able to do the job if he has never shown that he can?” The response I have heard, over and over again, in English, Spanish, German, and Dutch (the last two through translators) is that, “You can just see it in him.” “When you meet someone, you can see the potential. You can see it in their eyes.” “There is a light in her eyes, and when I see this, I know she will fit well.” Here I always push back, to check whether this is a common experience in the group. So far, most everyone agrees. “Yes, I can see this, and often I am right.” Okay. So, people actually seem to know something about people before the physical evidence of it ever shows up, and they see this potential in the experience of light.<sup>28</sup>

This is the daily work of designers. As an architect, when my wife works with her clients, much of the initial effort brings her and the client to a place where they can both see the same end product—the home. This is purely possibility. As the seeing becomes more real, they collaboratively experience what it would be like to live in the house, making it their home. This is very real—when they reach this shared knowing of what the future building will be like, they move onto the next phase of dedicating lots of resources to building the home, another level of perceived reality.

Entrepreneurs also do this, constantly seeing new business models, ways in which they can bring greater value to someone else by organizing resources in new ways. They do this by seeing possibility in each of the five primary relationships, and seeing how to translate that possibility they see into outcomes. One form of this creativity is expressed through innovation. How common is innovation in groups today? A 2008 national survey in the USA conducted by the National Science Foundation (NSF) found that “about 9% of the estimated 1.5 million for-profit companies were active product innovators in 2006-2008. The corresponding figure for process innovators was also about 9%.”<sup>29</sup>

Thus, it seems that many people see the potential in themselves, in others, in groups, and in many new situations. They seem to do this all of the time, seeing into the potential, the possibility, and they experience this seeing as very real. So real that they make assumptions—and significant decisions—based on the potential they see. Of course, not every decision to “go for it,” nor every new team or new hire, works out as well as anticipated. Nevertheless, these examples highlight our shared human experience that approaching reality from the perspective of light-possibility is how we create the possibility that good things will happen. This, in a nutshell, is how the assumption of abundance begets the reality of abundance.

---

## SIDEBAR—Scientific evidence for the light, motion, and matter levels of reality

Physics is the science of the nature of the physical universe. With its evidence-based heritage, the power of physics as a science comes from its very precise predictions of natural phenomenon, from very, very small sub-atomic particles to very, very large universes of galaxies.<sup>30</sup>

The whole of quantum physics now assumes that the world is one of infinite possibility. To deal with the difficulty of experiencing infinite possibility, best-selling authors and physicists Brian Cox and Jeff Forshaw clarify, “The fact that it is not something we can touch, smell, or see directly is irrelevant. Indeed, we would not get very far in physics if we decided to restrict our description of the Universe to things we can directly sense.”<sup>31</sup>

Cox and Forshaw explain the light-possibility, motion-development, and matter-things levels. “Things happen. We wake up, we make breakfast, we eat breakfast, and so on. We’ll call the occurrence of a thing ‘an event in space-time.’ We can uniquely describe an event in space-time by four numbers: three spatial coordinates describing where it happened and a time coordinate describing when it happened.” Motion in space-time, then, is the movement from one event in space-time to another. “Don’t forget that...these two distances, in space and time, are not universally agreed upon... Our aim is to find a distance in space-time upon which everyone agrees.”<sup>32</sup> Einstein described this space-time distance, by invoking the cosmic speed limit, which happens to be the speed of light.<sup>33</sup> This light, now known to be quanta or particles or photons, “behaves as a wave and as a particle.”<sup>34</sup> “Try though we may to split light into fundamental atomic pieces, it remains whole to the end.”<sup>35</sup>

Said another way, everything is energy, which shows up as possibility everywhere, and what we observe in motion is always moving through space-time at the cosmic speed limit. A thing is an event, a specific, non-moving moment of that motion. This sounds like everything is possible, some of it is moving, and some of it we can hold still for an instant. Another description from physics of our daily experience of possibility-potential, motion, and matter comes in the form of the total energy in a system. Total energy equals potential energy plus kinetic energy.  $E_{Total} = E_{Potential} + E_{Kinetic} = mgh + \frac{1}{2}mv^2$ . The possibility in potential energy, the movement in kinetic energy, and the mass in matter. Possibility, development, and things. Light, motion, and matter.

While people usually think of light as what they see, the light shining from the sun or from a lamp, physics uses the term much more broadly, as electromagnetism. Physics defines light as electromagnetic radiation, which is energy in the form of transverse magnetic and electric waves.<sup>36</sup> Said another way, light is energy, and it travels very fast, at the speed of light. Furthermore, Einstein showed that everything in the universe travels at the speed of light.<sup>37</sup> Everything.<sup>38</sup> Now this gets a bit complex, so I will try to simplify. Basically, everything moves through space-time, through an interweaving of space and time, at the same speed—the speed of light. Some of it moves mostly through space and barely through time, while some of it travels mostly through time and barely through space. This is a mind twister.

The relevance is that to move at the speed of light, in space-time, everything has a relationship to this speed of light.<sup>39</sup>

Now I will add a second piece to what physics shows us. Science also makes another mental leap. It suggests that at the quantum level—a very, very small level—everything exists in fields of potential—they are both here and not here, everywhere.<sup>40</sup> To sum up and pull together these three insights from physics, everything is related to light speed and exists as potential everywhere in space-time.<sup>41</sup> In physics terms, reality consists of light as potential, as wave, and as particle, all at the same time. This is what people said, from their own experience of seeing themselves and others—I can see the potential in the light in your eyes. You shine. And this is a driving force of being human.<sup>42</sup>

While the apparent tangibility of the here and now of the things-matter level seems to make it more real than the possibility-light and development-motion levels of reality, science is very unclear what here-now actually means. Until the quantum revolution at the beginning of the 1900s, things seemed to be real. Yet, since then physics has shown that, at the very small level of the quanta, there is nothing there. The social sciences have also dealt with this question, divided on whether reality actually exists or is simply created by human intention. For example, by the time you “realize” something is happening “right now,” you are already looking at the past—once you see something, it already happened. Even the term people commonly use “to realize” means to make real, or to convert into reality. So, what is real? Even the seemingly tangible is not. The relevance for our exploration is to see that the things-matter level of reality is useful, just as are the possibility-light and development-motion levels, and is just as privileged.

In his reflections on the theory of relativity, the British analytic philosopher and winner of the 1950 Nobel Prize in Literature, Bertrand Russell, put the complex science in plain terms, “Mass used to be defined as ‘quantity of matter,’...the mass as measured was found to increase with the velocity; this kind of mass was found to be really the same thing as energy... The world which the theory of relativity presents to our imagination, is not so much a world of ‘things’ in ‘motion’ as a world of *events*... It is *events* that are the stuff of relativity physics.”<sup>43</sup>

Connecting the scientific perspective of physics back to the creative human expression, in their book, initially published by the Harvard Business School Press, the Zanders see that, “All around us is vibrancy and energy. The universe is sparking with generative power. But how do we tap into the source—where can we find an electric socket for vitality? Do we have to pump up the energy on our own to carry out the day, or can we catch the current of another wellspring beyond ourselves? Suppose for a moment that vital, expressive energy flows everywhere, that it is the medium for that existence of life, and that any block to participating in that vitality lies within ourselves.”<sup>44</sup>

### *Harmonics, Vibrancy, Abundance*

We saw in Chapter 1 that people describe their experience of greater health in the five primary relationships using terms related to harmony, vibrancy, and abundance. It turns out that these experiential terms that people use, relate directly to the light-energy world of physics. Taking liberty with the terms, we can use discoveries in physics to describe a potential-wave-particle (read: possibility-motion-matter) theory of human agreements.

Waves transfer energy from one point in space-time to another. A wave, in its entirety, vibrates at a fundamental frequency. This wave is made up of overtones that vibrate at higher frequencies. A harmonic is an integer multiple of the fundamental frequency, meaning that it has, for example, two or three times the frequency. The overtones and fundamental form a harmonic series. In music, the harmonic provides the sound, the characteristic tone you recognize.<sup>45</sup> We can connect this to our experience in Chapter 1, from the examples of when people derive greater well-being when the different voices and relationships interact in a harmonic way.

In physics, waves are vibrations. “Higher frequencies must correspond to higher energies. That is because high frequency implies short wavelength (since short strings vibrate faster) and...a shorter wavelength corresponds to a higher-energy particle.”<sup>46</sup> Thus, greater vibrancy corresponds to higher energy. In chapter 1, we described vibrancy as the energy experienced in the primary relationships.

Now, for one last leap, Einstein showed conceptually, and rigorous research supported experimentally, that energy and matter are two different forms of the same thing: matter is stored energy, and energy is liberated matter.  $E=mc^2$ . Related by the speed of light multiplied by itself (a very large number!), this equation shows that there is an immense amount of energy in all material things. Sometimes people see this energy, usually very little is seen. This becomes a question of how—how to see more of the extraordinary energy resident in the thing. For all practical purposes, this very large amount of energy potential is abundant. In chapter 1, we described the outer circle of harmonic vibrancy as one where we experienced the abundance of energy available.

Thus, we see that harmony, vibrancy, and abundance are actually technical terms describing the harmonic interaction of relationships, the vibrant energy experienced, and the abundant energy available. I leave you with the question of why humans use light-energy terms to qualify their experience of greater well-being.

---

## **Development-Motion**

Now I want to look at how we experience another way of perceiving reality. This is the perception that focuses not on limitless possibility but on the process by which a particular possibility is, or may be, realized—the perception I have named “development.” We can recognize when we are looking at reality through this perspective when our predominant sense is of motion: things changing and new things, tangible and intangible, emerging. Just as I link the possibility perspective to its predominant experience of light, I like to link development with this sense of movement and change.

Sitting in the park in the Boston Commons with my class a few years ago, one of the students observed, “Looking around, at all of the people, animals, buildings, trees, and fountains, I can’t see anything that isn’t always changing. It is all dynamic.” A fellow teacher added, “That’s what I see too. That tree over there changes in size and strength, based on

the net difference of what flows in to the tree in the form of nutrients and water, and of what flows out of the tree in the form of oxygen, bark, leaves, and broken limbs. The net rate of change influences how much more or less there is every day, every year. Even when it looks the same to me day after day.” A kindergarten teacher in the group chimed in, “I see this in my work every now and then. The young children that come to us at the beginning of the year in kindergarten are very different than the ones that leave us to go on to first grade. Developmentally they come in as advanced toddlers and they leave ready to engage the world in the classroom.”

Not all movement is in a positive direction, of course, and not all actions produce the desired results, but the energy to pursue positive change is inherent in the development-motion perspective. As with light-possibility, this way of perceiving reality leads to certain types of assumptions about oneself and others. We expect to see people and situations changing over time. We expect individuals and groups to learn, to get better at what they do—to change. We look for plans to come to fruition—houses built, new relationships established and old ones strengthened, resources assembled and strategies pursued. This is a realm of action and movement towards the realization of expectations. The agreements people tend to make based on this perspective can lead them toward the occasional experiences of abundance that we saw in the middle circle of harmonic vibrancy.

### **Things-Matter**

The third way of perceiving reality focuses on what is here now. When you are operating in this realm, you are not thinking of many different possibilities or how things might change for the better. You are dealing with what is concrete and available in the present. This is a way of looking at reality that resonates with the old adage, “a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.”

In contrast to the predominant sense of light in possibility mode and the sense of motion and change that characterizes the development perspective, the feeling that lets you know you are working with the things-focused perception of reality is the grounded sense of knowing exactly what you have to work with. Whatever it is has volume and mass—it feels solid. For example, it is the resources you have right now, not what you might have in the future or what you can bring forth if you make an investment. It could be the capacity you have that you can apply right now. You may see and sense that you can count on the capacities others have. Whether it is an individual or a group, you know what they can do, today, here and now. This is the world of the matter-things perspective.<sup>47</sup>

I was working with a group of philanthropists in the US Northwest, and a young leader of a large family foundation expressed her gratitude for her experiences, “When I look around me, seeing what I really have, I feel blessed.” Driving through the forest in western Guatemala, a Mayan leader told me the same thing, “Look at how fertile this land is. My people have been working with this land for over 5,000 years. It is part of who we are, the people of corn. We are truly fortunate.”

Of course, along with solidity there is scarcity in this view of reality. You may be very energetic in making the most of what you have. If development and possibility are out of









the picture, however, before long you are likely to run into a sense of constraint or inadequacy. Your assumptions have the spirit of resigned acceptance: “This is just the way things are.” “There’s no point in trying to change them.” Agreements grounded in these kinds of assumptions tend to lock that sense of scarcity in place.

The manager of a mid-Western town told me, “When I get frustrated, feeling like I am backed into a corner, all I can see is how little I seem to have in me. Life seems so complicated. Even when it’s not true, it seems that way.” A colleague working in a national governmental agency agreed with him. She said, “I get so busy in my day-to-day work, that even when I feel like I am in the groove, flying, I go from one moment to the next, responding to life with whatever I have at hand. The day has passed, I have checked off dozens of things from my to-do list and answered a hundred e-mails, and I feel some satisfaction of getting lots done. And, the next day it’s the same all over again. It never stops, no matter what I do.”

### Three levels of perceived reality and three circles of harmonic vibrancy

By this point, I hope you are beginning to see how your perceptions of reality affect your experiences of more or less abundance and vibrancy. I like to refer to these different perspectives as “levels of perceived reality” to reference this connection to low, medium and high harmonic vibrancy as well as to the different qualities of experience they entail: the grounded sensation of matter; the airy, flowing sensibility of motion; and the transcendent aspect of light. The table in Figure 9, which we will refer to as the “Levels of Reality Map,” suggests how these distinctions appear in our experiences of the five primary relationships.

The 3 Levels of Perceived Reality Table

<b>HV Relationships</b> (Circles) Five Primary Levels of Relationships Perceived Reality (axis)	 <b>Self</b>	 <b>Other</b>	 <b>Group</b>	 <b>Nature</b>	 <b>Spirit</b>
<b>Possibility</b> Potential (Light)  $=a+b+c$	Envisioning my highest potential	Envisioning your highest potential	Envisioning our highest potential	Envisioning infinite resources	Envisioning infinite creativity
<b>Development</b> Motion (Verb)  $=a+b$	Developing my capacities & relationships	Supporting your development	Contributing to our development	Developing resources	Encouraging the flow of creativity
<b>Things</b> Matter (Noun)  $=a$	Staying grounded in what I can do	Staying grounded in what you can do	Staying grounded in what we can do	Staying grounded in what natural resources we have	Staying grounded in the inspiration that has been given to us



*Figure 9: Three Levels of Perceived Reality for the Five Primary Relationships*

Looking up and down each of the columns representing the five relationships in this table, we can begin to see how all three core aspects of reality are always present but not necessarily accessible, depending on our perception. At the level of things, we are dealing only with what exists now: the outcomes that have already occurred, the existing relationships, the capacities and resources we currently have, and the established ideas. We assume this is all there is to reality, and we base our agreements on that assumption. After giving a talk on this, a senior consultant wanted to make sure that I understood the importance of the things level and getting things done. “I feel responsible for the dozens of consultants in my group. We have lots of mouths to feed at home. Sometimes you have to focus on what you have in the short term. In those moments, we need to agree to do what we can with what we have now. That’s what pays the bills. I would be irresponsible to act otherwise.” There is a satisfying concreteness to this perception of reality but also scarcity, because the vision and energy needed to bring new things into being are lacking.

At the level of development, we are working with what exists *and* we assume that those outcomes, capacities, relationships, resources, and ideas can be enhanced, expanded, improved. We engage actively in pursuing positive change, shaping our agreements in support of that. Motion puts matter in movement as we focus on making some change that will make the things we have, tangible and intangible, more effective and valuable.

I recently met Julia at our local bank. An experience we had with her stood out, because of the unusually high level of attention she gave to our request. It was not my typical experience in that bank. As we worked through a series of forms, I inquired about her approach to customer service. She told me about how important she thought customer service was, and how she was always seeking to improve it. She shared, “In this branch office, we agree to spend some of our time and attention during the day on the experience of our customers; what we can learn, improving our services, and trying again.” I asked if there was support for doing all of this extra work. She shook her head, “It doesn’t take much time and we get better outcomes, but it does take attention and agreeing to value that attention. It seems to work well for us.”

Light accelerates the motion that moves the matter. From this perspective, we assume that reality includes infinite possibility, and our agreements reflect that assumption. We give ourselves permission to scan the universe of possible relationships, resources, capacities, and creative ideas to sense which ones represent our highest potential. Then we have this sense to guide us in determining which specific possibilities we want to work toward in the motion realm in order to realize specific outcomes in the realm of matter.

A colleague of mine described recently how she and her partners only took on work that they were passionate about, in which they could see huge potential for growth. She said, “The excitement is in seeing the possibilities together and then seeing how to manifest those possibilities. We do this together, and we find that it makes our work more valuable to us and to our customers.”

Integrating the three levels of perceived reality with the five primary relationships in this way allows us to get more specific about what creates the three circles of harmonic vibrancy. In Chapter 1 we saw that the inner circle is dominated by experiences of scarcity. Now we see that this scarcity derives from the fact that, in this experience, we can only access the things level of reality. In our experience of the middle circle of harmonic vibrancy, the circle of occasional abundance, we can access both the development level and the things level. In the outer circle, where we experience abundance in all five relationships, we can access all three levels of perceived reality. Figure 10 captures this graphically, showing the available levels of perceived reality for each circle of harmonic vibrancy.

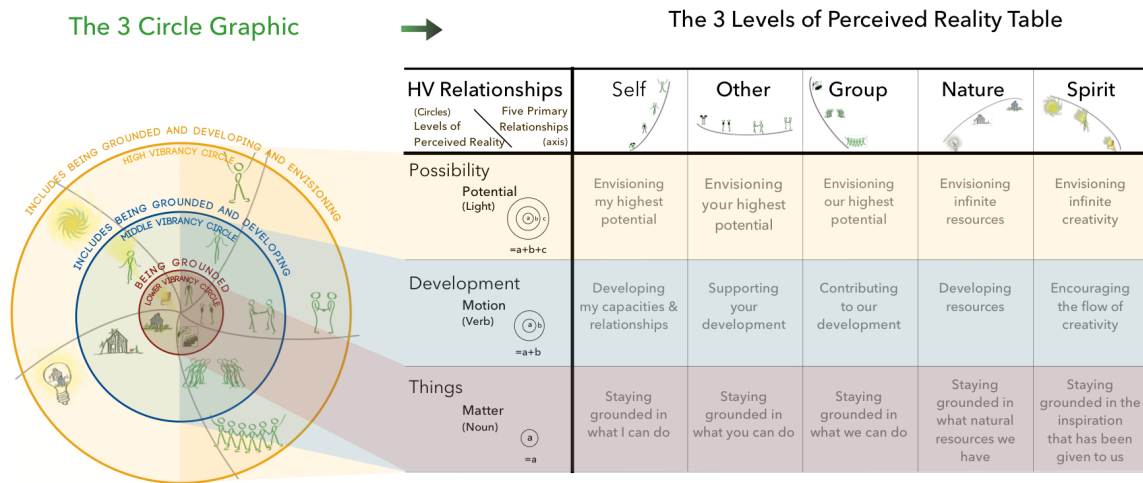


Figure 10: Levels of Perceived Reality Accessible in 3 Circles of Harmonic Vibrancy

In each type of experience depicted in the Three Circles of Harmonic Vibrancy, people work with different processes, tools, and capacities because they are working with different perceptions of reality.

### THREE PATHWAYS

All of this leads us to a critical insight: the level of harmonic vibrancy and abundance available to you depends completely on how you work with the levels of perceived reality and relationships. To get a sense of how this works, think of the table in Figure 9 as a complete map of reality—all five fundamental relationships and all three levels of perceived reality. What different routes could you take across this terrain in your quest for harmonic vibrancy? Since harmonic vibrancy, by definition, means being on the same level across all five relationships, we know the path cannot be random or diagonal; it must be either horizontal or vertical. And in fact, as I have explored this question in my conversations, I have found that people tend to take one of three pathways. I have named them “on-the-level,” “enlightened matter,” and “grounded potential.” Each path starts with a particular stance toward perceived reality and ends up in a completely different place relative to harmonic vibrancy.

### **The on-the-level path**

On the on-the-level path, people simply stay at the level they start at. Their stance toward reality goes something like, “It’s all about possibility,” or “It’s all about development,” or “It’s all about things.” They dismiss alternative perspectives as irrelevant.

For example, a senior partner in a European consultancy focused on the matter-level-only path says, “It is all, and only, about what is actually here. Unlike the dreamers who talk endlessly about possibilities, and unlike the process people who keep us in endless meetings, we are realists, dealing with actual outcomes we can see right now. We focus on what is concrete, on outcomes we can count on.”

A volunteer in our local “transition town” participative effort described the motion-level-only path, enthusiastically suggesting, “It is all about process. Without development nothing lives. It is in the dynamics of development that we can see all complexity. Dreaming of possibilities all day long is abstract, blue-sky thinking for academics. Working with the mundane of what is already here is for the tactical. We focus on what is real—process.” One of the fathers of the total quality movement, W. Edwards Deming, described this worldview, “If you can't describe what you are doing as a process, you don't know what you're doing.” The psychologist Carl Rogers said it another way, “The good life is a process, not a state of being. It is a direction not a destination.” It is all about the journey, not the destination.

An excited teacher, joining the visioning group for the school, told me about the light-level-only path, “From possibility we can envision anything, seeing all of the great potential around us. This envisioning brings the best out of everyone. It is all about the vision. The rest is just about putting the vision into play. We leave that to the tactical folks.” Carl Sandburg, the poet, captured this spirit, “I am an idealist. I don't know where I'm going, but I'm on my way.”

Some groups you know place greater emphasis on things (matter), development (motion), or possibility (light). They almost suggest that “reality” is really just at that level, and the other groups are missing the point. “Things” people see themselves as grounded, while the others are into that frou-frou stuff. “Development” people see themselves as in the flow, neither as crass as things-only types nor as flaky as infinite-possibility types. “Possibility” people see themselves as always living into their highest potential, riding the waves of the universe, while viewing all the others as less enlightened.

Most people have told me that they find some aspects of being in groups that operate in these on-the-level mindsets great and other aspects quite frustrating. Far more important for our quest for abundance and harmonic vibrancy, however, is the fact that working predominantly with just one level of perceived reality is a pathway that leads to scarcity, regardless of where it starts. If I just dream about possibility, nothing happens, and I starve. If I only work on development, I have no clear purpose for what I am developing, and I achieve no meaningful outcomes. If I just live in the material world, I do not mature, and when the world changes, I am caught by surprise.

In observing many low and high harmonic vibrancy groups, I have found that, to avoid a collapse into scarcity, people must work with all three levels simultaneously. This is the approach of the other two pathways. Each moves vertically on the map but from different perspectives, one top-down and the other bottom-up. This difference in starting point leads to quite different outcomes.

### **The enlightened-matter path**

Of the two pathways I have seen working with all three levels, one starts from the perspective that matter is the basis of reality. Thus, being healthy means more things. More things lead to greater well-being, the end desire of the good life. But things can run out. To be smart on this pathway, therefore, is to pay attention to the development of the capacities required to acquire more things. At the same time, wise matter management sees that one needs to look into the potential one can develop for generating more things, because the things that currently exist will eventually go away. The enlightened matter path thus means working with the motion that generates more matter and the light that nurtures and guides motion, all in service of matter.

That was very abstract. A work example might shine some light on this perspective. A few years ago, I worked with a Japanese journalist. She writes articles for her local newspaper. This is her “thing,” what is real. When we met, she had just talked with her boss about further developing her skills at writing. She and her boss agreed that she would take some journalistic-writing classes. Over time, with practice, she would get better at her craft. She has brought the motion-development level of reality to her matter-thing reality. She then began to wonder whether she had the potential within her to take her writing to a whole new level. With her mentor, she explored her potential for being a book writer and found that she believed that that possibility was within her. Sure enough it was. She was able to write a book-length, journalistic piece covering a topic that impassioned her. Shifting into the light-possibility perception of reality showed her a possibility for further development that she had not seen before. The light-possibility perspective expanded the motion-development perspective, which led her to success at the matter-things level of perceived reality—all in service of the original thing. It all helped her do her job better. The scarcity in this perspective comes from the initial focus, on the thing-matter level of the task at hand. Her exploration was about her potential to develop her capacity to do the writing job better—the focus is on the job. The process started with the job, and asked if she was capable of doing the job better. Seeking to improve on the scarcity of the thing at hand still starts from scarcity, trying to lessen the grip of scarcity—trying to reduce scarcity—is not the same as accepting infinite abundance.

The enlightened-matter path certainly seems to be more productive and generative than the matter-only path. The consultancy where my friend works—heavily focused on financial outcomes—sees the need to develop its client relationships to ensure future income. A Guatemalan father told me about his son, who was already on the national soccer team. He told me about the team’s coach, who spent lots of time on individual player capacity-development, clear that improving skills would lead to continued success on the field. Cooperation among team members at a global NGO I worked with certainly enhanced their capacity to deliver high-quality projects. In all these examples, I find that agreements

formed on this path can achieve the middle circle of occasional abundance, but I have not found any of these examples that have achieved the outer circle of high harmonic vibrancy and abundance. Why? By starting from the matter-things perspective, an individual or group is starting with an assumption of scarcity, limiting the harmonic vibrancy they can experience. I will show this later in the book.

### **The grounded-potential path**

The second path through all three levels of perceived reality starts at the light-possibility level. Starting at this level means starting with an assumption of infinite abundance. Light is the potential seen when envisioning possibilities. Motion-development starts the transformation of light energy into matter by shifting a particular possibility into a living probability. Thus, motion creates a special case of light as it filters out many possibilities to focus on realizing just one. In the same way, matter emerges as a special case of motion as time is filtered out to make a particular thing appear right here, right now. Thus, the grounded potential path involves choosing what to manifest from infinite possibility and then deciding when to stop development to bring forth a specific thing at a given space and time. This is the path that grounds the light, bringing it into motion-matter form.<sup>48</sup>

Let's return to the work example I described above with the Japanese writer I met. On the grounded-potential path she would start by asking a very different question. Instead of starting with, "Can I do the job better?" she would ask, "Who am I?" By pursuing this question, she finds she can uncover her deeper passion, her greater gifts. Maybe she sees that she has powerful stories to tell and wants to be a novelist. Seemingly, she has arrived at the same point as she did on the enlightened matter path—she is going to write a book. But her path is quite different. Once she chooses to be a novelist, she looks at the capacities she needs to develop over time, figuring out what to develop now and what to develop later. In this she is working at the motion-development level of perceived reality. She then looks at what she can do now, to have the experience of one outcome, knowing that in a while she will have different outcomes. This is the matter-thing level reality she chooses to manifest out of the motion-development of her light potential.

These are abundance-infused choices. In both cases, she is writing a book. On the enlightened-matter path, she arrived there as part of her job—a scarcity-minimizing search to improve the things level. On the grounded potential path, she lived into her passion—an abundance-maximizing exploration of the choices she could make. The first tried to expand from scarcity. The second brought abundance to life. This is a very different result, with completely different energy available to sustain it.

"Our universe is alive with sparks. We have at our fingertips an infinite capacity to light a spark of possibility. Passion, rather than fear, is the igniting force. Abundance, rather than scarcity, is the context...it is about playing together as partners in a field of light."<sup>49</sup>

### **Why the path matters**

Each of the three paths started with different questions, followed different routes, and ended in very different outcomes. This is why the path matters. As the poet Ogden Nash said, in

the book with the same title, “You can’t get there from here.”<sup>50</sup> If the destination is healthier outcomes and the journey is living the experience, then the path to living all three levels of perceived reality in all five primary relationships matters.

### **Summary: Two principles for perceiving the reality of abundance**

As we continued the exploration of what has emerged in my many conversations about the experiences of abundance-based agreements, we saw that embedded in the five relationships we described in Chapter 1, people described their experience of three levels of perceived reality (light, motion, and matter), when they show up, and when they do not. We described the experience of seeing the potential, the light, in the five relationships, calling this reality possibility. In this level, we saw infinite abundance in the visible future. We also described that along with this vision of possibility, we experienced being able to see the future results of that possibility: how it would show up. We called these outcomes that we could see in the future here-now “things” or matter. Finally, we also described the process we could see for moving from the possibility to the outcome. We called this motion, where we develop capacities and relationships, a path of development. Thus, we described the experience of three levels of reality: the potential we could see, the resulting outcomes, and the path for getting there over time.

We also described three pathways people take through these three levels of perceived reality. Some choose the “on-the-level” path, staying on one level. They tend to find emptiness in not manifesting anything. Possibility for the sake of possibility alone is as unfulfilling as development for development’s sake or outcomes purely for the sake of outcomes. These are all examples of scarcity in many forms, as nothing of abundance manifested. Others we found started from possibility, seeing the future, the results they would obtain, and a path for getting there. On the “grounded potential” path, they started with infinite abundance in possibility and chose how to manifest it. Still others we found started from the reality of matter, of outcomes, and tried to add the development of capacities to manifest more things, invoking the possibilities of greater development. They found they were often able to expand their initial scarcity, but never to find abundance, as they started the “enlightened matter” path from scarcity.

From this exploration, we find two principles for perceiving the reality of abundance. First, it takes all three levels. We have two data points for this principle: what we have observed in the field and logic. In the field, through our survey, stories from many other observers, and our own visits, we find that in groups that experience abundance, all three levels are perceived as real. In groups experiencing scarcity, only one or two levels are present. Logically, this also makes sense. We experience scarcity in the things we have; some have them and others do not. We experience abundance in the possibilities we see; they are inexhaustibly everywhere. So, for abundance we start with possibility. To experience the outcomes, the things, they need to be developed over time. Thus, the three levels are all necessary to experience abundance.

The second principle is that the path matters. Since all three levels are necessary for abundance, staying on only one level of reality can only manifest scarcity. Likewise, starting with scarcity can only expand scarcity, not invite abundance. When moving from possibility

to development to things, you start with the infinite abundance of potential and choose how and when it will come into being. This gives you choices all along the way. What possibilities are developed when, to produce what outcomes?

Within this experience of five relationships and three levels of perceived reality, we have the elements we need to see the agreements we want to choose, which leads us to the next topic, agreements.