Chapter 9 – Three Animals that Form Perception

It is a mystery to me how people actually believe that cartoon characters, sock puppets, or insurance company lizards can actually talk and tell the truth. The-truth-about-the-truth is that even actual talkers usually have no-one enforcing that they say what they mean, or that even they say the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. I am as likely to suspend my disbelief of animated characters as I will for animated people, without pausing to take an inventory of what any done-deeds actually show me too.

The most basic demonstration of perception is another 'glass half-full half-empty' scenario that can require me to consider: What if what is inside the glass is evil, toxic, or just undesirable? Will my optimistic-self be willing to consider revising my opinion that a half-empty glass is now a better option? Have I considered that it might not be worth the guesswork until the glass's contents really change?

Having a career where I work 40-some different jobs isn't all bad for me; I get to learn from the experiences of many others, plus the observations these people pick up from their past circles of influence; I get access to over a thousand years of combined and associated stories and experiences for the price of losing access to the devils-I-know.

Starting work at a new place with new faces, I sometimes want to ask someone I end up working with: "If you could be any three animals, which three would you pick?" The choice can really be three *anythings* – three cars, foods, movies, etc - because the reasoning behind asking works over short time-spans and deals with perceptions.

Maybe just a fallacy, but of the three objects chosen, the top choice is usually related to the perception that a person would like

others to see in them; the middle choice relates to the perception that they think others see in them; and the last item relates to their own brutally-honest self-perception…how they truly see themselves at that point-in-time in their life.

My ideas of perception and self-perception are incredibly fluid depending on the situation, personality, disability, and simple dysfunction. A better and more helpful question I should probably be asking is: "What three animals do I remind you of?"

I think that it is more likely another's own actions are a more accurate clue of who they really are, than his or her own words; actions are something more telling then hearing about what another's three animals are, and observing the size of the gap between their words and deeds say a mouthful too: How well do the animals that he or she describe, match up to what I see these same people actually doing? How much do I have to reconcile and rationalize between what I expect based on the words I hear, and the reality of what I see?

The first time I am exposed to this 'trick' I am slightly devastated because my animals at the time are something like lion, eagle, and zebra, and I suspect that the choices made by others for me (at that same time) are closer to sea-otter, woodpecker, and jackass.

Today I am not too concerned about what my three animals exactly are. In the future I just want my animals to stay a closer match to each other, above being special or exotic; I prefer to at least have, and to present, an accurate self-perception. After I get my three animals to be a bit more similar, I can worry about picking and following the qualities that I admire about any specific animal or two.

I am pretty sure that people, families, businesses, societies, governments, and groups in-general are all capable of being defined by six animals, which include the three animals of one's own make-up, compared to the three animals that others define them by at that time; and with zero requirement that any or all of the six of the animals be related to any level of the reality that his or her actions (and history) otherwise show me.