

The Open Field

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The paper attempts to define an epistemology of process as a basis for the development of expressive and creative action. Five conditions of process are identified—unstructured action, change, projectability, the situation, the abstract field—and their behavioral implications are discussed. Finally, a methodology for the personal use of process is presented.

As social scientists, we are probably less attentive than we should be to the wavering balance between structure and process in understanding human action. Structure is the invariant pattern of relationships among functional points in a system, while process is the continuous emergence of new elements from those already existing. Structure concerns itself with stability or quasi-stability; process, with change. Though seemingly in contrast, structure and process complement each other both as concepts and in the real world: to paraphrase Whitehead (1929) structure can be snatched only out of process; and the novelty that emerges from process can realize itself only by submitting to structure.

As men, we need to recognize the implications of the structure–process dichotomy for the ordering of our lives. There is a choice at both individual and societal levels in the forms that we and our environments can assume. Three basic forms can be identified:

(1) *The Structural Form*. Its main features are preservation of itself at the expense of environment and subordination of its parts to the whole. Men's energies, therefore, are directed to the maintenance of the system more or less as it is, and also of themselves as they occupy the functional roles of the system. It is the world of Classical Rationalism.

(2) *The Process Form*. Through flux and chance, events coincide to make novel forms. In the extreme, there is no guiding purpose; things

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merely happen. The precondition for process is the abnegation of control; men have to deny their existing structures in order to lay themselves open to the creative possibilities of chance. It is questionable whether men can assume the process form for long periods without dissipating themselves into chronic nonstructure, e.g., madness and chaos. The paradigm for process is Surrealism.

(3) *The Structure–Process Balance*. Structure and process complement each other in a state of “regenerative equilibrium” (Koestler, 1964). The relationship is cyclic: the disintegration of structure → a temporary immersion in process → the attainment of a new, more creative structure. In this form, men continually have to disapprove the adequacy of their own structures without having detailed preconceptions of what should take their place. The relevant paradigm is Creative Evolution (Bergson, 1944).

The key to understanding the structure–process relationship in human systems lies in the concept of *purpose*. Purpose binds together and gives direction to the system; it preserves structure at the expense of process. Put more exactly, fixed, specific purposes make fixed, specific structures, and process therefore is inversely related to the degree of fixity and specificity of purpose. Given a fixed, specific purpose, everything adjusts itself to that purpose.

Classifying by purpose suggests two different types of system: (1) *instrumental*, and (2) *expressive*. It is in the nature of instrumental systems to use themselves as means for attaining goals external to themselves (e.g., production units). Their organizational form is one that stresses structure over process; their purposes are relatively specific. In contrast, expressive systems use environmental resources as means to cultivate their own varied possibilities (e.g., creative artists). Their organizational form is of “structure–process balance”; their purposes, diffuse.

The two types of system follow different principles of development: (1) *linear*, and (2) *contingent*. Linear development proceeds by preset purpose and structure *from the known to the known*; the system grows by imposing its own image on the environment. The characteristic strategy of linear development is *regulation*, i.e., the control of variance likely to hinder goal attainment. Instrumental systems develop linearly by sharpening their instrumentality and/or increasing their size. Contingent development explicitly rejects the restrictions of prior purpose and structure; every contingency is valued as a potential source of growth. The system is viewed as a mosaic of possibilities whose actualization depends upon chance factors; its growth is multiform, dependent on adventure and discovery. Development occurs through a strategy of *revelation* whereby the system, abandoning conscious purpose, experiences its environment as an ingestion of unfolding forms.

The existential choice for man lies in understanding himself and his institutions in terms of instrumental/expressive systems and in deciding which of these should characterize his social forms.

Despite the increasing humanization of the social sciences, we are still short of concepts which would enable us to see experience in process terms. As a discipline, social science seems almost naturally disposed to expressing itself in structural terms, where structure becomes an end in itself and not a means. There is some promise of a fuller conceptualization of process in Systems Theory, especially in concepts such as "variety" and "morphogenesis" (Buckley, 1967), but these process constructs are yoked to purposeful systems whose aims are to subjugate process to their own particular structural designs. Systems Theory, as presently conceived, has, therefore, an inbuilt structural bias.

We have to move out of social science proper in order to find a conceptualization appropriate to the process view of man. There are two requirements for such a view: (1) a Whiteheadian conception of man and environment as mutually immanent in a unitary field: "In an act of perception, the person involved is neither a merely passive reflector nor a dominating actor who imposes his preconceived scheme of things on to his surroundings, but is instead a knot or focus in a network of to-and-fro influences" (Waddington, 1969); (2) a definition of man as "ever open" and "unfinished" in the sense of Heidegger's *Dasein*. Man thus experiences himself and his world as an Open Field.

The Open Field defines the conditions necessary for process and the emergence of expressive systems. But definition itself is never enough; though its purpose is to put sense on experience, it unwittingly serves to arrest the course of process, to freeze it in a concept. The validity of the Open Field lies in its *enactment*. Yet we have come so far from the possibility of unselected experience that it now seems necessary to spell out exactly the conditions which will enable us to repossess it.

THE PRIMACY OF "ACTION"

Theories of human action typically assume that the content of most action is determined by the images people have of their environments. Images precede actions and give them meaning. The image is an active organization of past experience through which history writes the future. As such, the image inhibits the possibility of creative transformation which may be required for personal renewal or to meet novel demands. In order to subvert the tyranny of the image, pure action, uncontaminated by a directing image, must be generated. The point of such "action" is to create a cog-

native vacuum which man must fill—since he so abhors a void—with images that break new ground. Thus, action becomes the dynamo for change and the basis of growth. The man who enters the Open Field uses action as a means of revealing the latent in himself and his world; his action makes visible what is invisible. The habits of action are to be seen at their most lucid in the work of the “action painters” described by Rosenberg (1962):

The painter no longer approached his easel with an image in his mind; he went up to it with material in his hand to do something to that other piece of material in front of him. The image would be the result of this encounter In this mood there is no point to an act if you already know what it contains What matters always is the revelation contained in the act Art as action rests on the enormous assumption that the artist accepts as real only that which he is in the process of creating The artist works in a condition of open possibility, risking, to follow Kierkegaard, the anguish of the aesthetic, which accompanies possibility lacking in reality. To maintain the force to refrain from settling anything, he must exercise in himself a constant No.²

Action penetrates the social world via three mechanisms of change: (1) the “open model” form of planned change, (2) crisis, and (3) rupture.

The open model form of planned change begins with a rudimentary program of desired change which avoids specifying a priori strategies and solutions, thus permitting the program to unfold and define itself over time. In such circumstances, the change agent is immediately involved in the change process and so helps to shape action and in turn is shaped by it. The situation transforms the program as much as the program transforms the situation. Specific examples of open model approaches to change are “broad-aim” programs in community development (Weiss & Rein, 1970) and action research (Chein, Cook, & Harding, 1948).

Crisis is an experience, externally generated, which destroys or radically questions one or more of man’s central values and which he has no ready means of coping with. Learned behavior breaks down because (1) the agent is “robbed of essential purpose, as in severe personal bereavement,” (2) events cannot be understood in terms of existing categories, and/or (3) the “same event falls into more than one category” so that “there may then no longer be one best action but two or more which mutually exclude each other . . .” (Marris, 1974). The essential feature of crisis is loss of control by the agent: action (at least initially) occurs in a meaning vacuum, having become detached from clear purpose and outcome. The course of action must follow its uncertain context, like the behavior of the mariner in Poe’s story *A Descent into the Maelstrom*, who learned that the only way to survive the vortex was to be incorporated into the form of the vortex itself.

The role of action in crisis is vividly seen in the early stages of the T Group. Group members are thrust without warning into a social void

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created by the absence of collective expectations and purpose. “If there are no meanings, no values, no source of sustenance or help, then man, as creator, must invent, conjure up meanings and values, sustenance and succour out of nothing” (Laing, 1967). In the group, every action is a gesture which seeks to define the conditions of meaningful community but, paradoxically, that community can only be achieved through the members’ active participation in the chaos—chaos, being the source of infinite possibilities, is the royal road to creation—conceived by their diverse unstructured actions.

Rupture is a self-generated break with established structures; it seeks to free the agent from the thrall of the inhabited context and to create the conditions necessary for imageless action and the emergence of new forms and meanings. Rupture was the basic working method of Surrealism which was specifically intended to realize “that unlimited capacity for rejection that is the whole secret of human advance . . .” (Breton, 1935). In the French revolution of 1968, rupture was the operational means of bringing about the “shock of freedom” required for the development of personal and social creative change. “The transition from . . . the liberating shock (induced by rupture) . . . to the self-management of life and work . . . takes place so quickly that during such a period of improvisation repressed desires rise to the surface and produce, as it were automatically, by simultaneous emergence, a natural reinvention—or rather, the *discovery* of what was only latent—of schemes of community life, such as self-management” (Willener, 1970).

CHANCE

Chance is when the unexpected coincide. Through chance, man communes with possibilities. Chance, therefore, becomes the device by which man amplifies his capacity for spontaneous growth.

There is a preparatory problem in that the mind has to assume a form that will enable it to experience chance. It is Suzuki’s (1974) problem of how to relate man to nature . . . “unknown and mind must be somehow of the same nature and cherish a mutual communication.” This connection can be realized through the strategies of (1) suspended purpose, and (2) induced disorder.

The strategy of suspended purpose expresses Cage’s (1968) instruction that the mind must surrender its right to control in order to enhance its awareness of the world: “The highest purpose is to have no purpose at all. This puts one in accord with nature in her manner of operation.” The world of meaning expands so that (to quote the painter Arp) a broken twig

becomes equal to the stars. The experience of this “objective chance” is described by Breton (1960) in his imaginative narrative *Nadja*:

I am concerned . . . with facts which may belong to the order of pure observation, but which on each occasion present all the appearances of a signal, without our being able to say precisely which signal, and of what; facts which when I am alone permit me to enjoy unlikely complicities, which convince me of my error in occasionally presuming I stand at the helm alone. Such facts, from the simplest to the most complex, should be assigned a hierarchy, from the special, indefinable reaction at the sight of extremely rare objects or upon our arrival in a strange place (both accompanied by the distinct sensation that something momentous, something essential depends upon them), to the complete lack of peace with ourselves provoked by certain juxtapositions, certain combinations of circumstance which greatly surpass our understanding and permit us to resume rational activity only if, in most cases, we call upon our very instinct of self-preservation to enable us to do so.³

The facts of “objective chance” reveal a contingent rather than an instrumental truth or a truth which you see *laterally*, out of the corner of your eye: lateral truth is a

knowledge that doesn't move forward like an arrow in flight, but expands sideways, like an arrow enlarging in flight, or like the archer, discovering that although he has hit the bull's-eye and won the prize, his head is on a pillow and the sun is coming through the window. Lateral knowledge is knowledge that's from a wholly unexpected direction, from a direction that's not even understood as a direction until the knowledge forces itself upon one. (Pirsig, 1974)

This is also the metaphor of the “kaleidoscope equipped with consciousness” which Baudelaire used to describe the *flâneur* who drifted through the Paris crowds sensitive only to the creative flow of chance and which, a century later, was incorporated into the theory of urban design known as “psycho geography” (Ivain, 1974).

Through induced disorder, man challenges himself with the exigencies of self-imposed chaos whose possibilities he permutes into another beginning. The recognition that creative renewal depends upon disorder is as old as civilized life (Wind, 1969) but it has been left to our own time to apotheosize the relationship into a general cultural-political praxis (Marcuse, 1969). The direction of induced disorder may be inward on the self or outward on the world. Rimbaud disordered himself in order to create the ultimate magic world (“Le poète se fait *voyant* par un long, immense et raisonné dérèglement de tous les sens”) while the painter Pollock disordered the world in order to discover himself (“. . . it was as if he crashed an immensely heavy object on to a table and sent flying in all directions some sticks that had been lying in carefully arranged groups. This was his attempt to disrupt the time flux and to invoke a new contingency. To throw his own presence into the smoothly modulated pattern of existence. Or violently shake an all too predictable kaleidoscope” (Robertson, 1960)). In these

³Quoted by permission of John Calder.

private acts, men can remake themselves but not their fellow men. For men to remake each other requires the translation of the strategy of induced disorder into a principle of social design such as we see in Sennett's (1971) vision of urban life where the "brute chance" of spontaneous social intrusions becomes a major means of personal and interpersonal growth.

PROJECTABILITY

The essence of projectability lies in (1) the power of men to project their unconscious forces into the external world, and (2) the power of external forms to draw out and give substance to the unconscious content. Projectability is, therefore, a quality which pervades the total field.

How men project their unconscious forces depends on their ability to manage them. If the appropriate skills are there, projection is expressed in the form of a creative act which enriches the projector and his world.

The forces of the imagination, from which (the artist) draws his strength, have a disruptive and capricious power which he must manage with economy. If he indulges his imagination too freely, it may run wild and destroy him and his work by excess. . . . Yet if he plagues his genius with the wrong kind of drill, and uses too many contrivances and refinements, the imagination may shrivel; it can atrophy. (Wind, 1969)

If the skills are absent, the unconscious forces insinuate themselves into the fabric of the world and work for its dissolution or else explode in a rush of contemptuous violence that seeks to destroy everything in its path. In such ways, the unconscious forces contribute to the psychopathology of groups (Bion, 1961) and help explain the latent brittleness of human organization.

The forms of the world are ambiguous (though we may fight to deny this fact) and so demand our participation. "It is the way of the earth to make no display of completed work but rather to bring everything to completion vicariously" (the *I Ching*). We are led to fill in the gaps, find the keys to the cryptic, elaborate the allusory, create out of chaos—whether it be as the mimesis which fills out the latency of an institutional role or as that more elemental process described by Gaston Bachelard (e.g., 1969) in his psychoanalyses of the material world.

The *project* is the vehicle for projectability. The project is that which is "thrown forward" to modify the future. The project is a process which moves between *projection* and *construction*. The projection is a *coming into being* of the inner content; the construction is the *form* taken by the projection in the external world. In one usage, the project moves naturally *from* projection *to* construction, in which the inner forces direct the development of the construction according to a principle of "organic incrementalism." Pollock's paintings are projects of this kind. Here, the prob-

lem is of managing the individual products that break into light in the course of projection *as a field*—that is, the products in their relations with each other—which gets continually redefined as new products emerge. The construction, therefore, is a moving field which exists not for itself but to give form to an interior content. In a different usage, the project—perhaps impatient to be realized—seeks first a form in the external world as its construction. (Consider Lukács' description of form as “the shortest way to the top”) (Goldmann, 1969). In this case, the borrowed construction directs the projection in proportion to the specificity of its own structure. The project develops “epigenetically,” that is, by elaborating and expanding on the “program” of structures contained in its construction. The paradigms portrayed by Kuhn (1962) as shaping the form and content of scientific knowledge are such epigenetic constructions—“paradigms provide scientists not only with a map but also with some of the directions for map-making.”

Finally, there are constructions which, by communal consent, we deny projectability to. These I call “self-defining reifications.” The positivist's world is made up of constructions of this kind—pure facts, autonomous, inviolable. They have their own meanings, their own definitional limbo, as things “out there,” separated from their spectators in the human world. It is a world “experienced by man as a strange facticity, an *opus alienum* over which he has no control rather than as the *opus proprium* of his own productive activity” (Berger & Luckmann, 1967).

THE SITUATION

The situation is the immediately perceived field of actualities (objects, events), the concrete context in which we carry on our lives. It is the pith of existential meaning, where the perceptions do their work and find a unity. The situation is the rudimentary morphology of everyday experience—discrete, vivid, multiple. Man-in-the-world is an endless, all-over apposition of man-in-situations.

The first thing about the situation is its concreteness. It is full of definite objects and events which strike the senses and shape their perceptions in definite ways; the situation embodies “that *definiteness* to which our experience has to conform” (Whitehead, 1929). The interacting actualities that make up the situation are both source of and target for a man's attentions, those disciplined perceptions which must go before all our acts of personal and social growth. We live among and through *things*, from them we get our natural power, our impetus to act and create beyond ourselves. “As soon as you get towards the concrete, you cannot exclude action” (Whitehead, 1925). The other extreme is the way of the “abstract” generalization whose appeal is to the intellect only and not to the vivacity of

the senses themselves, and which, lacking the focus of the object or thing, forces man, if he is not careful, into a state of clouded subjectivity in which he has, unnaturally, to propel himself. Any excessive subjectivity or concern for self precludes him from participating fully in the situation.

The philosophy of the situation demands a theory of discontinuous and heterogeneous experience whose parts are multiple and individually active. Only in conditions of difference and autonomy can man find his own internal power, be his own measure. Otherwise, inertia reigns. The logic is given by Riemann's principle that "the inertial and the metrical structures of the world are so intimately connected . . . that the metrical field will of necessity become flexible as soon as the inertial field is deprived of its geometric rigidity" (Weyl, 1949). The metric is the key to the inertia problem. When the metric is based on static, homogeneous forms, as in Euclidean space, the inertial field is absolute and immutable. For evidence, see Whorf's (1956a) treatment of our time metric and how it adduces our thoughts and energies. The power of the inertial field is cut down to the extent that the metric rests upon the concepts of the *local* and the *variable* which together characterize the uniqueness of the situation. Such situational metrics are found in post-Newtonian physics and information theory. When the metric becomes situational it becomes flexible and thus more amenable to the intimate requirements of the human grain. A corollary is this: that the management of self must always begin with a situational metric; otherwise control must, by definition, reside somewhere else.

Psychological definitions of the person overwork the past and the power of habit. In psychoanalysis, he is fixated in early childhood. In behaviorism, he is shaped through the tedious accretion of habits. For situationism, the here-and-now and the response to it is what matters. It is the old truism that men become what they experience, but this time in different guise, that of the unique present. If the potentialities of men are manifold, they are so only as they materialize in a manifold of situations. There lies the situational thrust to man's use and growth: he makes himself to the degree he makes use of the situation.

The converse is "spectatorism" or the blandishment, by others, of spectacle in which one has no true part. It is the experience of the image of the thing rather than the thing itself. And when images are set up, men are put down, dispersed from the very events which alone can give them back their desired sharpness.

The opening of the field must go by way of the situation, of the things themselves in their interactions. For this is the situational key to process: that it is viewed as a nexus of things and happenings between them. (We destroy the living root of the situation when we do, as we often do, that most pernicious form of abstraction which is to take thing and activity and treat them separately). Two appreciations follow from this view. One is, the

form of the situation follows the logic of discursive action and not the logic of linear structure, for things can and do happen according to their own impulse and direction. The happenings are their own ends, not a progress to some other state. (“We torture ourselves getting somewhere, and when we get there it is nowhere, for there is nowhere to get to” [Lawrence, 1974]). The second is, things act *and* are acted on, that is, they are both cause *and* effect of their happenings which really means, for man, he is as much part of his happenings as the other objects about him, and what he creates turns back and creates him.

THE ABSTRACT FIELD

But the field goes beyond the situation to find its larger meaning. For what is discrete and singular is, by that very token, alone. The field of larger meaning resides in a concept of the world as a penetralium of relationships in which the many become one. Spelled out, it is three things:

(1) The basis of meaning is *relationship*, which gives the principle: *only connect*.

(2) Relationship is the stem of unity and through it the many become one.

(3) The combinatorics of relationship make possible the elevation of the field above the literal and obvious. The many can combine variously ad infinitum to give a field of endless depth and extent, a unity of difference.

The Abstract Field is what Whitehead (1929) would call an “extensive continuum,” whose immanent structure is the very axis of process:

This extensive continuum is one relational complex in which all potential objectifications find their niche. It underlies the whole world, past, present, and future An extensive continuum is a complex of entities united by the various allied relationships of whole to part, and of overlapping so as to possess common parts, and of contact, and of other relationships derived from these primary relationships. The notion of a “continuum” involves both the property of indefinite divisibility and the property of unbounded extension. There are always entities beyond entities, because nonentity is no boundary. This extensive continuum expresses the solidarity of all possible standpoints throughout the whole process of the world. It is not a fact prior to the world: it is the first determination of order—that is, of real potentiality—arising out of the general character of the world.⁴

The use of the Abstract Field is as a cosmology which joins the order of unity with the uncton of transcendent creation. This is the cosmology of process through which my personal causality connects with the world’s ontogeny.

Equal to the Abstract Field is the tendency of man’s thought to reach for a noumenal world of pure pattern beyond his own physicality. As the

⁴Quoted by permission of The Macmillan Company.

Abstract Field is the pristine continuity of form-not-yet-realized, so in the realm of the human mind is the unconscious through which the Abstract Field comes to form, naturally, as an act of nature, without strain. But man lives within two fields, the Abstract and the Literal, and may find the noumenal properties of the first only through the firm ground of the second. The Literal Field is the discrete, denotable world in space and time, around which we weave and hang our lights. Whorf (1956b) brings out the specific workings of this distinction in his discussion of language and *Manas*:

It is said that in the plane of *Manas* there are two great levels, called *Rupa* and *Arupa* levels. The lower is the realm of "name and form," *Nama* and *Rupa*. Here "form" means organisation in space ("our" three-dimensional space). This is far from being coextensive with pattern in a universal sense. And *Nama*, "name," is not language or the linguistic order, but only one level in it, the level of the process of "lexation" or of giving words (names) to parts of the whole manifold of experience, parts which are thereby made to stand out in a semi-fictitious isolation. Thus a word like "sky," which in English can be treated like "board" (the sky, a sky, skies, some skies, piece of sky, etc.) leads us to think of a mere optical apparition in ways appropriate only to relatively isolated solid bodies. "Hill" and "swamp" persuade us to regard local variations in altitude or soil composition of the ground as distinct THINGS like tables and chairs. Each language performs this artificial chopping up of the continuous spread and flow of existence in a different way. Words and speech are not the same thing . . . Thus the level of *Rupa* and *Nama*—shape-segmentation and vocabulary—is part of the linguistic order, but a somewhat rudimentary and not self-sufficient part. It depends upon a higher level of organisation, the level at which its COMBINATORY SCHEME appears. This is the *Arupa* level—the pattern world par excellence. *Arupa*, "formless," does not mean without linguistic form or organisation, but without reference to spatial, visual shape, marking out in space, which as we saw with "hill" and "swamp" is an important feature of reference on the lexical level. *Arupa* is a realm of patterns that can be "actualized" in space and time in the materials of lower planes, but are themselves indifferent to space and time. Such patterns are not like the meanings of words, but they are somewhat like the way meaning appears in sentences. They are not like individual sentences but like SCHEMES of sentences and designs of sentence structure. Our personal conscious "minds" can understand such patterns in a limited way by using mathematical or grammatical FORMULAS into which words, values, quantities, etc., can be substituted.⁵

In other words, the *materials* of expression are in the Literal Field but the *method* of expression is elsewhere. The method is tied to the autonomous processes of decision and creation within the unconscious which serve the latter's special will to reveal the larger mystery of the "primitive abstract"—". . . the riddle is that the true self is not the asserting function but an obeying one, that the actionable is *larger* than the individual and can be obeyed to" (Olson, 1970). The method is the putting of oneself among uncertainties and staying there, or what Keats called "Negative Capability"—the capability "of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason." Out of this swirl of indeterminacy,

⁵Quoted by permission of The Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press.

a creation delivers itself in its own wisdom and needs no pulling. It is the work of the Intelligence that *breathes*. The opposite is the “irritable reaching after fact and reason,” preoccupation with Literal Field.

Our curse is that we are slaves to an epistemology that separates the knower from the known, the knavish subject–object split systematized and promulgated by Plato in his flawed program to make man “autonomous.” Its ostensive purpose was to give man *control* over nature (including himself) by developing the twin functions of intellection and reflection so that he could stand apart (a “thinking reed”) from the vivid flow of experience, distance being a necessary condition of mastery (Havelock, 1964). Its covert effects were *reductive* because its method was based on “the absolute necessity of the isolation of the per se” through the permanence of timeless categories.

Their syntax excludes tenses of the verb *to be*. Principles and properties and topics just *are*. When placed in relationship with each other they provide the terms of analytic statements or of equations, which cannot share in the syntax of process and time, for they are not statements of specific situations and instances, not statements of action. (Havelock, 1964)

Thus ripped out of a context and set in the aspic of man’s controlling subjectivity, they can never go beyond themselves into that variable, wider world of the Abstract Field. Two delusions mark this epistemology: one, that through it man became autonomous; two, that it gave a unitary framework to diverse experience. The first requires the insight that man gets autonomy when he *uses tools*, not when he is *wedded to ends*, and the force of the Platonic system was that it was a specific end just as much as it was a specific tool. That end was the *law* or *principle*, the essence beyond change. Therein lay the power, not in man who was mere messenger. The second is that the unity of the system is built on division, for the whole is an integration of individual categories that theoretically exhaust the knowledge of the world. The root and norm is “divide and rule” to produce a hierarchy of categories, but this logic cannot deal with unity based on interaction or multiplicity of function. Its unity is essentially reductive:

“To *reduce*” means not only to simplify, schematize, dogmatize, and classify. It means also to arrest and to fix, to change the total into the partial while yet laying claim to totality through extrapolation; it means to transform totality into a closed circle. (Lefebvre, 1969)

The motive of Platonic systems and their like is for order as priority and their consequent strategy is regulative. Or put this another way: to regulate, as a priority of life, is to forbid or dampen down difference so that regulative systems can know nothing other than themselves, they cannot enter the larger area of the actionable which is the Abstract Field. The true, and only, way into the latter’s possibilities is the three-fold cycle: (1) suspension of conscious, specific purpose, (2) embracing of, and staying among, uncer-

tainties, (3) creation through the passive voice, i.e., the Causal Unconscious. The heart has its epistemology

ENVOI: THE USES OF THE FIELD⁶

The Open Field is the condition of process. Process is the creative advance of events, according to a law of parsimonious action, in a field of intensive relationships, whose main terms, expositively, are:

Creative advance: process of becoming, the action between beginning and end; in human affairs, realized through unstructured action, chance connections, projection.

Parsimonious action: that which goes by the straightest possible path, without fault, effort or encumbrance; “like snow that falls from a bamboo leaf.” Via the mastery of parsimonious action, man is enabled to pass through the literal to the abstract, to go behind appearance.

Intensive relationships: literally, relationships in tension, for Whitehead a defining characteristic of “life.” Intensity is got by realizing and maintaining (i.e., not resolving) a variety of contraries while eliminating incompatibilities or those opposites that would cancel each other.

The whole is a field of process in intensive order, not just change or novelty, rather the *dance* of things.

The point of the Field is its use, not analysis. Use is what makes ideas move. There is a mode of use that short-circuits the human core by directing man’s values to ends outside himself as in the diagnosis that in getting and spending we lay waste our powers. Instead, a contrasting use is now needed to show the Field as a means of illuminating man as the source of his own life-nourishing process. The use is *homotropic*. The homotropic processes are: *to find out* and *to make*. Through these, the individual dimensions of the Field are convened and gain direction: The Field becomes homotropic, open to man’s proper use. To “find out” is to explore and discover the possibilities of a situation through un- (or semi-) structured action, chance connections, projection, etc., while to “make” is to construct a form which will show these discoveries as happenings in a field of process. To find out is to get knowledge of process as is, rough and not through the neat telling of another’s logic or self-interest. There are just two ways of finding out: to place oneself directly in the experience of process and/or, though with care, use the evidence of men who have recorded the essential forms of process via the right methodologies. What you find out (and this is the key) is *information*. Information is two things: it is *difference* (in the cybernetic sense)

⁶Throughout this section I have freely borrowed and adapted ideas from Bateson (1972), Olson (1970), and Whitehead (1929).

and it is *what goes into form*, i.e., in-forms. Ergo: difference is the key to form. So to find out is to be in form, i.e., literally be inside it, be part of. To be open to process is to be open to a field of dynamic difference (a bit is static difference, not true process) which means to be engaged with the Field at all possible points and not lose any of its active content through laziness or an act of prior selection. It is to know oneself more fully “in the world,” not as separate from it.

To “make” is to present what is found out in a form that will validly express the variety in process. The problem is to contain (“hold together”) diversity “like it is.” Only right form makes man content. To make is to put the content of process into right form. What you make has both *express* and *impress*. Express is the style in which you manage the bringing of content into form; the express of process in right form is “grace.” Impress is the moral effect of what you make either upon the world of nature or the community of men; grace and right form make good impress. To find out and to make are correlative: the more you find out, the more you can make.

If such are the uses of the Field, what are the mechanics of those uses, how does man come to a methodology of its practice? It is a question, finally and when all the theory is done, of how we manage ourselves in our daily reality. A needed recognition is that we are systemic, that we are not simply parts of our ecology but flow with it: “. . . the mental characteristics of the system are immanent, not in some part, but in the system as a whole” (Bateson, 1972). The mind is the flow of information in balance throughout the man–field system. To derive a practice from this is another and more difficult matter but it requires that man learn to become a less wilful creature than he is by abjuring his cataleptic dependence for the management of his affairs on the inflated faculty of “conscious purpose” and permit himself to be guided more by the systemic wisdom of his unconscious processes. The specifics of such a substitute system must lie in the functions of (1) perception, and (2) “parcratic” wholeness. Perception is primary to an engagement with process not just because here is the locus of man’s meeting with the world but because of perception’s ability to register the small grain of process through the diverse sensations at nerve ending and in complex feeling system and orchestrate them in a synergic analogue of multiphasic experience. We miss this vital thing if we think “behavior” is what life is all about. The system must recognize its wholeness through the character of its individual parts—hence “parcratic,” the power of the whole residing in the parts. The whole must be ever present in the parts. Not one dominates, for then the whole loses its systemic wisdom. The intellect is there of course, one among equals, not suborned to control in the interests of “conscious purpose.” Expressed like this, the two functions lead us to the principle that

process can only be got through *particulars*, not through systems per se. It is in the particulars of ourselves and what is about us that true process moves. Particulars are primary, systems secondary. If we reverse this, we cut ourselves off from the use of reality as process. This must be a discoverable condition, else we are lost. I am not sure, but I want to suggest that a methodology to do this would revolve around the issues of:

FORCE MEDIUM FORM MEANING

I submit these are the launching points for a practice of process.

Force. All process is in essence transference of force from agent to object. The process is the force; agent and object, the reference points. But force is something more: it is the energy of process, of the action between terms. And there is a choice in how we may use this force. We can reduce its immediacy for us by translating the reference points into limiting terms as we do in the structure of logical thought when subject and object are the framework for a complete thought and the action, the doing, is just something that joins the two terms together. Or we can imitate nature in its continuity of action and not seek the terminal satisfaction of completeness. This is to go straight for the tensions operating as indeterminate relationships between objects—which we do when we “find out” and “make”—and by doing so become engrossed in the uncertainties for their own sake and not for their resolution. The last point is crucial. It is to treat uncertainty instrumentally as a temporary source of interest with a soluble state at the end, which is one of man’s ways of backing off from reality. But to complete is to step back from process and lose force. The practice is to get in there and stay there. Is this learnable? Not as a dialectic, or even a trialectic, but as a *field* of such tensions. As truth is natural force between things, to take up force is to participate in truth, as in the “purposeless tension” of Zen.

Medium. Man, more exactly his psychophysiology, is his own medium for process. His work is done literally through the senses and neural pathways and it is precisely these informational sinews of the body that have to be cultivated—not the imperious egohood of the self—in order for man to take up the process, the life, within himself and the Field. We have the choice of perceiving through the senses or through the ego. Though we do not see it, they are incompatible opposites. The ego structures experience to compliment itself. Its habit is to do this at the expense of the external world, maximizing its own ease and welfare in technicity. There is no way it can meet

reality as humble process. That way lies in the meticulous use of the senses among the particulars of situations so that perception becomes both a seeing and a feeling through the organs, enabling perception and action to run together in the “flash of lightning” that needs no reflecting intelligence. The synchrony moves at 100 mph. In other words, perception, control, and action are always one, though the words alone give no idea of the enormous discipline needed for such skillful use. It is the skill of containing, without conscious thought, a complex perceptual process which develops only gradually, as the power of holding together the parts develops, from the simple registration of raw sensation to the complex appreciation of systemic relationships, *in order to free* the “workings of the heart”—the skill which uses the concrete to reveal the abstract. This is an accomplishment which goes beyond the simple punctuation of experience into instrumental contexts (in which the “total context is made to fit the expected punctuation”) to a facility to stay among and weave together the dissimilar and conflicting contexts of the wider field. The attentions must be poised at all times and all angles to take in the world of particulars to make this possible. Life begins with alertness to difference and falls away when the attentions sag. Such practice must be sustained by reverence and care, for only through the cathexis of his affections on the objects and events of his immediate attention can man bind himself authentically to the wider world. How can one love a system per se? We must always be in the grain of it. The lesson, at least as old as Pythagoras, is: right management of our world begins with right management of ourselves. Is this learnable?

Form. The problem of form is the containment of difference. Good form is the unity of difference. There are two basic and opposed methods for containing difference. One is to categorize differences into similarities on the basis of shared criteria—this is formation through classification. It has order but no real unity since the whole is a sum of homogenized separates and the difference of particulars is lost, preempted by difference at the level of gross categories. It reduces the world to a convenience. The other is to capture the field as an imbrication of differences, in which events move out in all directions, penetrating and being penetrated by each other and so revealing their uniqueness through contrast with all other events in the field. What matters is that the individual parts gain from the wider field, and not the field per se. This is good form or form that respects its content. There is a model for this: form emerges from events through context, the steps being: event \longleftrightarrow context of event \longleftrightarrow context of context of event \longleftrightarrow and so on. This way form is always leading on beyond itself, hinting—through contrasts, ambiguities, resistances—at contexts yet to come. It is form as unfinished business. Form operates from within towards the outside world, Kandinsky said. In other words, content in, form out. The rule is always to

focus on the field of content—objects and events—for the form will, by a process of unconscious syncretism, always look after itself. Beware the seduction by form per se; there lies our ruin.

Meaning. The ontogenetic meaning of process resides in the principle of *individuated wholeness*, which is the process of the psyche towards self-realization. The origin is Jung's (1953) picture of the self as *center and circumference*, unconscious to conscious. The center is (1) a gravity point for creation: "... the center—itself virtually unknowable—acts like a magnet on the disparate materials and processes of the unconscious and gradually captures them as in a crystal lattice," and (2) a force that moves out to express itself through an ever-widening integration of events in the conscious world, the circumference representing this movement out. Center is at once continuous, whole yet undifferentiated in nature, and its task is to express itself as a unity while at the same time differentiating itself as a unique process; hence the circumference seeks a form of individuated wholeness. But there is a paradox in that individuation means separation while wholeness means integration. Individuation rests on the creation of identifiable boundaries which separate the system from its setting. Methodology, space and time are the bases of all system boundaries. Wholeness depends upon coincidence among these three root parameters of life. Meaning resides in events as individuated wholes. The center is motive for metaphor, from the small tropes we trip over daily to the cosmos that contains it all—"through metaphor to reconcile the people and the stones" (William Carlos Williams). Here is the rhythm, the natural flow, of center and circumference in its course of growth. He who has wholeness has rhythm and he who has rhythm has the universe. Meaning is also rhythm.

So these are the issues we have to take up, I believe, in order to get to a practice of the Open Field. It comes down in the end to how we use ourselves. If there is nothing "in here," there is nothing (of ours) "out there." Process begins with oneself and moves out from here. One is ever open. The alternative is the rule of structure outside you—in fact, that which measures you—and to which, having no measure to call your own, you refer everything. You are thus always closed, you do not own the key.

We have not yet properly understood the human cost tolled by the systems we have built to assuage our fears of uncertainty and the void. Nor the thick grip they have on us in consequence. Somewhere McLuhan says the old world was a world of roles and the modern world is a world of jobs. It is so because our systems demand our efforts and our beliefs for their continued maintenance and growth. We are conduits for them. Yet, as Blake divined at the birth pangs of the organizational society (is it only 200 years ago now?), we endure a profound psychic hurt in serving systems and not being allowed to find our own deep centers. The result is an inner rage

which often disrupts. There is no parting from your own shadow, Whitehead said. Here is the real why of the Open Field. Can anything, then, be more imperative than to find the lost land of the soul and make it pragmatic? At bottom, it is a question of locating that point of balance which enables the satisfaction of outside *and* the expression of inside and thereafter managing the weights to keep it right. There is evidence we had it once and that some few have it still (Bateson, 1972; Lévi-Strauss, 1966). Our task, through an archaeology of man, is to get back and redeem that past wisdom for present use. For the repossession of ourselves inside (as primary process or primitive abstract) is the repossession of process outside, and vice versa.

Meanwhile, we are overfaced with what Lefebvre (1971) would call the systems of compulsion. How can we do the two necessary things: (1) make them equal to us, and (2) scramble them into a workable process? For myself, the means exist and are there, in social science, to be picked up for this use. The one is self-management generalized to all our activities—working, learning, etc.—not just as a way of socializing à la Marx the institutions through which society keeps moving, but as a way of making space for the definition of our real selves. The challenge is to manage ourselves all ways, in and out and right across, not to be steered, however benignly, by that which is external and above. Democracy is not enough. The second is to make process out of institutional stasis by working on the syntax of life precisely where the rules of stasis are felt, the threshing floor—what Lefebvre (1971) calls the recreation of everyday life—literally the only place where we can recognize the system as ourselves. The one rule for the inversion of stasis to process is, hew close to the experience that quickens. Despite entropy, to be fought for in every act.

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