

IMAGE

AN ACTION RESEARCH JOURNAL
ON
PERSONAL AND ORGANISATIONAL TRANSFORMATION

THE INSTITUTE OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS and LENS INTERNATIONAL

IMAGE

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PERSONAL AND ORGANISATIONAL TRANSFORMATION

The Action Research Journal is written to communicate designs, formats and ideas of transformational processes which promote the human factor in private and public sectors. It is published by the Corporate Services Division of The Institute of Cultural Affairs: India for distribution through the Asia Network of ICA and LENS International organisations. These include ICA: India (Bombay, Panvel and Pune), LENS Services Pvt. Ltd. (New Delhi), LENS International Malaysia Sdn. Bhd., ICA: Australia, ICA: Philippines, ICA: Taiwan, ICA Associates (Hong Kong) and LENS International Japan.

The Action Research Journal draws on a variety of sources including other ICA world-wide offices and affiliated professional consulting organisations to provide a spectrum of practical tools and constructs that facilitate individual and organisational transformation. We welcome comments and articles from our readers.

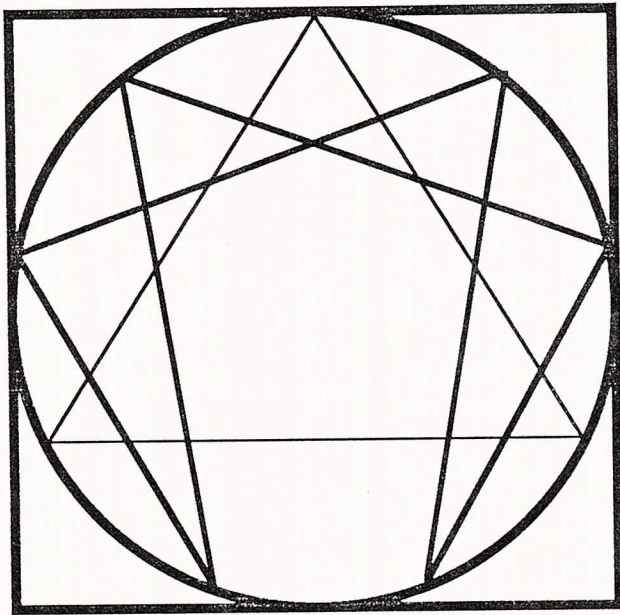
ISSUE FOURTEEN MAY 1992

"SYSTEMIC INTEGRITY"

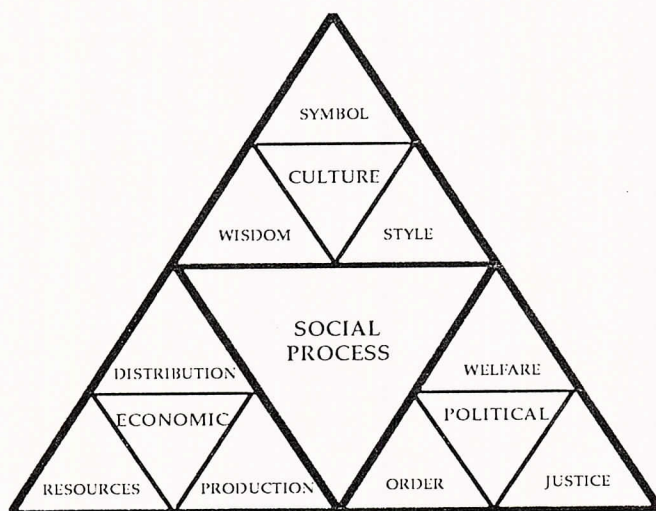
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JOURNAL OVERVIEW



Systemic Integrity is the theme of this fourteenth issue of IMAGE Journal on Personal and Organisational Transformation. This was perhaps the most difficult issue of the Image Journals to write and edit. The subject does not lend itself to easy reading. My own work on Systemic thinking started over 20 years ago when the Institute of Cultural Affairs worked on the Social Process triangles and the theory of imbalances. It was an incredible piece of work taking several years to accomplish and involving literally thousands of people in the process.

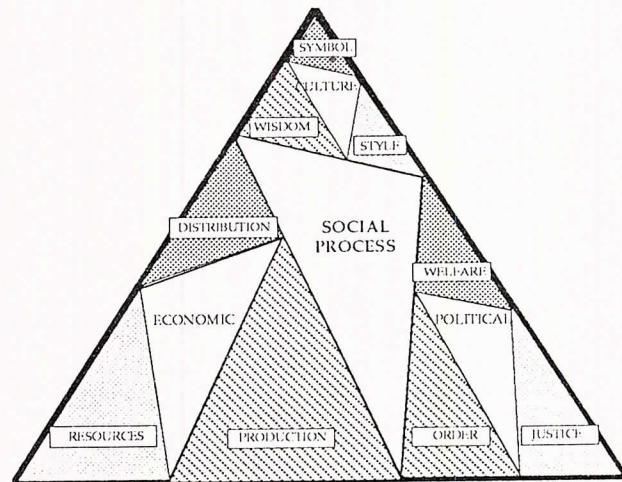


The Social Process was discerned to consist of three dynamics, the **Economic**, which sustains society, **Political**, which defends society and the **Cultural**, which illuminates or directs society. The form may change, but the same dynamic has

prevailed in all societies since the beginning of human community. Each large triangle was further divided into three using the same tri-polar screen. This was done down to seven levels.

An imbalanced triangle means its three dynamics are not each performing their role equally. For instance, in today's world, the Economic dynamic is dominate, it overshadows and colors our total life. The Cultural dynamic is undergoing tremendous change and is unable to provide a stable, meaning-giving environment. Within the Economic, **Production** rules over **Resources** and **Distribution**. We measure a nation's health by its *Gross National Production*, ignoring its use of *Resources* or the degree of equity in its *Distribution*.

Through this analysis of the fundamental dynamics of society and how they operate as a system, insight was gained on how an imbalanced society might be "levered" for change. The Institute's work today can be directly traced to the understanding of how to correct imbalances within society. Later, the ICA used the same methods to build a set of its basic tools - the Corporate Process, and the Culture Process - a set of triangles that



enable people to understand the functioning of their organisations in a dynamic sense. Integrity results when these dynamics are balanced and each is playing a full role in the organisation's functioning.

Perhaps it is our current experience in day to day life of confronting the complexity of life in so many arenas that has awakened us to the challenge of thinking and acting in the realm of systems. More important, we have begun to understand our planet as a "living system", even to the extent that, as Peter Russell points out in his book and video "The Global Brain", the earth seems to function as though it were intelligent. It has been given to mankind the sacred stewardship task to care for the systemic integrity of

this planet. We must become the "guardians" of the whole system. Each of us must understand this to be our role and see to it that our institutions complement this integrity. We need to think, act and be part of "whole systems".

This Issue

The symbol chosen for this issue is the enneagram. This mystic symbol has traditionally represented the creative flow of energy. Recently, it surfaced again in a book called Fisherman's Guide, by Robert Campbell. Those of you who know me are aware that for some time now I have been trying to communicate what Bob describes in his book. It is, for me, a sentinel work in articulating how we are to understand the new paradigm in which we find ourselves. For this reason I have decided to try and convey some of its significance for organisational transformation through several articles, including a **Book Review** and an excerpt from the book, which we have called **The System in Business**.

In order to make this work on the System more relevant and practical, we have included a description of its application in a **System Consultation** which was just concluded with an engineering company in India. Finally, we include **An Interview With Bob Campbell**, where he talks about some of the aspects of the System and its universal application.

In addition, this issue draws heavily on the work of Peter M. Senge, The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of The Learning Organisation, in which he suggests that systems thinking is the critical discipline for organisations to learn. Without the skill of seeing things in systems relationships, organisations suffer the learning 'disabilities' which cripple growth. We don't know why our strategies are failing and we are helpless to correct them. Assumptions are made based on linear thinking that fails to take into account other forces at work. In excerpts from his chapter called, "A Shift of Mind," Senge makes his case for systems thinking as the fifth discipline, the conceptual cornerstone the underlies all the five learning disciplines of his book. In his view, without systems thinking organisations have neither the incentive nor the means to integrate the learning disciplines into living reality. For practical use, "How to Read A Systems Diagram" is highlighted along with a list of the "Laws of Systems Thinking."

In the article, "From the Unit To The System: The New View of Reality", John Epps gives us an overview of the movement in history from the particular, to the relationship and now to the system as the predominant reality. "It is the elevation of the

whole system to the position of preeminence that marks the shift in the new age." The implications for a new myth are explored in his article.

We hope you enjoy this challenging issue. Please let us have your feedback. The last issue on **Strategic Thinking** generated a lot of enthusiasm and response. Some of the letters are included below. My thanks to those of you who wrote, it makes all this work worthwhile!

Jack Gilles
Editor

Letters to the Editor

"Strategic Thinking issue is just great! This publication needs wider distribution."

Lyn and Bill Edwards, Chicago II USA

"Was very impressed with your last IMAGE with its focus on 'Strategic Thinking'. Good work!"

Dick Alton, ICAI Brussels, Belgium

"The IMAGE is terrific. We use the ideas in our consult work. I find it very helpful to have new IMAGES to share in our marketing calls."

Judith Hamje, Facilit, Lima Peru

"My association with ICA has brought about a great change in me and I am sure it will help me in solving all problems through the techniques spelt out in the IMAGE and the LENS programme. I thank you for promptly sending me the copy of the journal which I go through without fail. The article which I liked most was the 'Breakthrough Strategy' which appeared in the latest issue."

Vibha Patil, Crompton Greaves, Indore, India

"Please know that I appreciate the quality of your action research journal. I find the continuing anthology of current thinking in organizational development quite useful in my work. Please keep your good editorial work coming. Thank you very much."

Sheridan L. Bailey, Phoenix, Az USA

"Thanks for your great work as visible through the IMAGE. We used an excerpt from your latest IMAGE at a 25-person ICA weekend gathering recently to everyone's benefit - thanks!"

Maria Maguire, Wentworthville, Australia

A SHIFT OF MIND - Peter Senge

Systems thinking is a discipline for seeing wholes. It is a framework for seeing interrelationships rather than things, for seeing patterns of change rather than static "snapshots." It is a set of general principles - distilled over the course of the twentieth century, spanning fields as diverse as the physical and social sciences, engineering, and management. It is also a set of specific tools and techniques, originating in two threads: in "feedback" concepts and cybernetics and in "servo-mechanism" engineering theory dating back to the nineteenth century. During the last thirty years, these tools have been applied to understand a wide range of corporate, urban, regional, economic, political, ecological, and even physiological systems. And systems thinking is a sensibility - for the subtle interconnectedness that gives living systems their unique character.

Today, systems thinking is needed more than ever because we are becoming overwhelmed by complexity. Perhaps for the first time in history, humankind has the capacity to create far more information than anyone can absorb, to foster far greater interdependency than anyone can manage, and to accelerate change far faster than anyone's ability to keep pace. Certainly the scale of complexity is without precedent. All around us are examples of "systemic breakdowns" - problems such as global warming, ozone depletion, the international drug trade, and the U.S. trade and budget deficits - problems that have no simple local cause. Similarly, organizations break down, despite individual brilliance and innovative products, because they are unable to pull their diverse functions and talents into a productive whole.

Complexity can easily undermine confidence and responsibility - as in the frequent refrain, "It's all too complex for me," or "there's nothing I can do. It's the system." Systems thinking is the antidote to this sense of helplessness that many feel as we enter the "age of interdependence." Systems thinking is a discipline for seeing the "structures" that underlie complex situations, and for discerning high from low leverage change. That is, by seeing wholes we learn how to foster health. To do so, systems thinking offers a language that begins by restructuring how we think.

I call systems thinking the fifth discipline because it is the conceptual cornerstone that underlies all of the five learning disciplines. All are concerned with a shift of mind from seeing parts to seeing wholes, from seeing people as helpless reactors to seeing them as active participants in shaping their reality, from reacting to the present to creating the future. Without systems thinking, there is neither the incentive nor the means to integrate

the learning disciplines once they have come into practice. As the fifth discipline, systems thinking is the cornerstone of how learning organisations think about their world.

In systems thinking there are two types of complexity - detail and dynamic complexity. Dynamic complexity is situations where cause and effect are subtle, and where the effects over time of interventions are not obvious. Conventional forecasting, planning, and analysis methods are not equipped to deal with dynamic complexity. Mixing many ingredients in a stew involves detail complexity, as does following a complex set of instructions to assemble a machine, or taking inventory in a discount retail store. But none of these situations is especially complex dynamically.

When the same action has dramatically different effects in the short run and the long, there is dynamic complexity. When an action has one set of consequences locally and a very different set of consequences in another part of the system, there is dynamic complexity. When obvious interventions produce nonobvious consequences, there is dynamic complexity. A gyroscope is a dynamically complex machine: If you push downward on one edge, it moves to the left; if you push another edge to the left, it moves upward. Yet, how trivially simple is a gyroscope when compared with the complex dynamics of an enterprise, where it takes days to produce something, weeks to develop a new marketing promotion, months to hire and train new people, and years to develop new products, nurture management talent, and build a reputation for quality - and all of these processes interact continually.

The real leverage in most management situations lies in understanding dynamic complexity, not detail complexity. Balancing market growth and capacity expansion is a dynamic problem. Developing a profitable mix of price, product (or service) quality, design, and availability that make a strong market position is a dynamic problem. Improving quality, lowering total costs, and satisfying customers in a sustainable manner is a dynamic problem.

Unfortunately, most "systems analyses" focus on detail complexity not dynamic complexity. Simulations with thousands of variables and complex arrays of details can actually distract us from seeing patterns and major interrelationships. In fact, sadly, for most people "systems thinking" means "fighting complexity with complexity," devising increasingly "complex" (we should really say "detailed") solutions to increasingly "complex" problems. In fact, this is the antithesis of real systems thinking.

The essence of the discipline of systems thinking lies in a shift of mind:

* seeing interrelationships rather than linear

cause-effect chains, and

* seeing processes of change rather than snap shots

The practice of systems thinking starts with understanding a simple concept called "feedback" that shows how actions can reinforce or counteract (balance) each other. It builds learning to recognise types of "structures" that recur again and again: the arms race is a generic or archetypal pattern of escalation, at its heart no different from turf warfare between two street gangs, the demise of a marriage, or the advertising battles of two consumer goods companies fighting for market share. Eventually, systems thinking forms a rich language for describing a vast array of interrelationships and patterns of change. Ultimately, it simplifies life by helping us see the deeper patterns lying behind the events and the details.

Learning any new language is difficult at first. But as you start to master the basics, it gets easier. Research with young children has shown that many learn systems thinking remarkably quickly. It appears that we have latent skills as systems thinkers that are undeveloped, even repressed by formal education in linear thinking. Hopefully, we will rediscover some of those latent skills and bring to the surface the systems thinker that is within each of us.

Seeing Circles of Causality

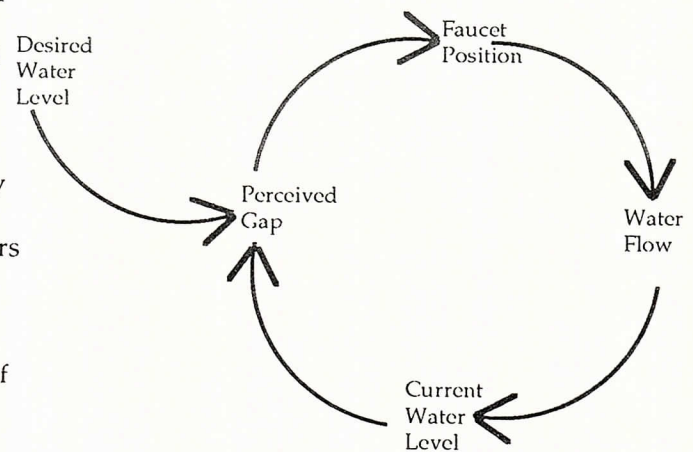
Reality is made up of circles but we see straight lines. Herein lie the beginnings of our limitation as systems thinkers.

One of the reasons for this fragmentation in our thinking stems from our language. Language shapes perception. What we see depends on what we are prepared to see. Western languages, with their subject-verb-object structure, are biased toward a linear view. If we want to see system-wide interrelationships, we need a language of interrelationships, a language made up of circles. Without such a language, our habitual ways of seeing the world produce fragmented views and counterproductive actions. Such a language is important in facing dynamically complex issues and strategic choices, especially when individuals, teams, and organizations need to see beyond events and into the forces that shape change.

To illustrate the rudiments of the new language, consider a very simple system - filling a glass of water. You might think, "That's not a system - it's too simple." But think again.

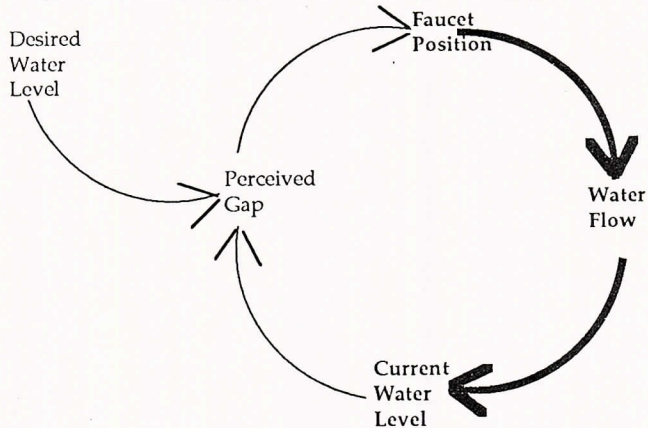
From the linear viewpoint, we say, "I am filling a glass of water." But, in fact, as we fill the glass, we

are watching the water level rise. We monitor the "gap" between the level and our goal, the "desired water level." As the water approaches the desired level, we adjust the faucet position to slow the flow of water, until it is turned off when the glass is full. In fact, when we fill a glass of water we operate in a "water-regulation" system involving five variables: our desired water level, the glass's current water level, the gap between the two, the faucet position, and the water flow. These variables are organized in a circle or loop of cause-effect relationships which is called a "feedback process." The process operates continuously to bring the water level to its desired level:

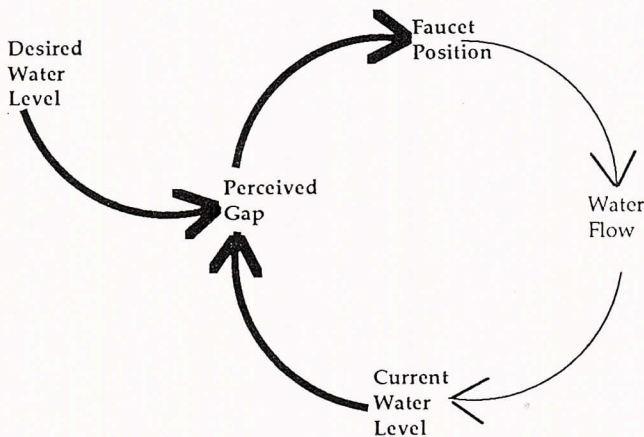


People get confused about "feedback" because we often use the word in a somewhat different way - to gather opinions about an act we have undertaken. "Give me some feedback on the brewery decision," you might say. "What did you think of the way I handled it?" In that context, "positive feedback" means encouraging remarks and "negative feedback" means bad news. But in systems thinking, feedback is a broader concept. It means any reciprocal flow of influence. In systems thinking it is an axiom that every influence is both *cause* and *effect*. Nothing is ever influenced in just one direction.

Though simple in concept, the feedback loop overturns deeply ingrained ideas - such as causality. In everyday English we say, "I am filling the glass of water" without thinking very deeply about the real meaning of the statement. It implies a one-way causality - "I am causing the water level to rise." More precisely, "My hand on the faucet is controlling the rate of flow of water into the glass." Clearly, this statement describes only half of the feedback process: the linkages from "faucet position" to "flow of water" to "water level."



But it would be just as true to describe only the other "half" of the process: "The level of water in the glass is controlling my hand."



Both statements are equally incomplete. The more complete statement of causality is that my intent to fill a glass of water creates a system that causes water to flow in when the level is low, then shuts the flow off when the glass is full. In other words, the structure causes the behavior. This distinction is important because seeing only individual actions and missing the structure underlying the actions lies at the root of our powerlessness in complex situations.

In fact, all causal attributions made in everyday English are highly suspect! Most are embedded in linear ways of seeing. They are at best partially accurate, inherently biased toward describing portions of reciprocal processes, not the entire processes.

Another idea overturned by the feedback perspective is anthropocentrism - or seeing ourselves as the center of activities. The simple description, "I am filling the glass of water," suggests a world of human actors standing at the center of activity, operating on an inanimate reality. From the systems perspective, the human actor is part of the feedback process, not standing apart from it. This represents a profound shift in awareness. It allows us to see how

we are continually both influenced by and influencing our reality. It is the shift in awareness so ardently advocated by ecologists in their cries that we see ourselves as part of nature, not separate from nature. It is the shift in awareness recognized by many (but not all) of the world's great philosophical systems - for example, the Bhagavad Gita's chastisement:

All actions are wrought by the qualities of nature only. The self, deluded by egoism, thinketh: "I am the doer."

In addition, the feedback concept complicates the ethical issue of responsibility. In the arms race, who is responsible? From each side's linear view, responsibility clearly lie with the other side: "It is their aggressive actions, and their nationalistic intent, that are causing us to respond by building our arms." A linear view always suggests a simple locus of responsibility. When things go wrong, this is seen as blame - "he, she, it did it" - or guilt - "I did it." At a deep level, there is no difference between blame and guilt, for both spring from linear perceptions. From the linear view, we are always looking for someone or something that must be responsible - they can even be directed toward hidden agents within ourselves. When my son was four years old, he used to say, "My stomach won't let me eat it," when turning down his vegetables. We may chuckle, but is his assignment of responsibility really different from the adult who says, "My neuroses keep me from trusting people."

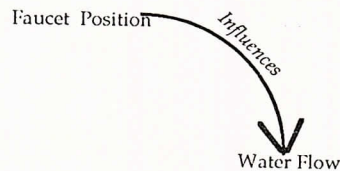
In mastering systems thinking, we give up the assumption that there must be an individual, or individual agent, responsible. The feedback perspective suggests that everyone shares responsibility for problems generated by a system. That doesn't necessarily imply that everyone can exert equal leverage in changing the system. But it does imply that the search for scapegoats - a particularly alluring pastime in individualistic cultures - is a blind alley.

Finally, the feedback concept illuminates the limitations of our language. When we try to describe in words even a very simple system, such as filling the water glass, it gets very awkward: "When I fill a glass of water, there is a feedback process that causes me to adjust the faucet position, which adjusts the water flow and feeds back to alter the water position. The goal of the process is to make the water level rise to my desired level." This is precisely why a new language for describing systems is needed. If it is this awkward to describe a system as simple as filling a water glass, imagine our difficulties using everyday English to describe the multiple feedback processes in an organisation.

How To Read A Systems Diagram

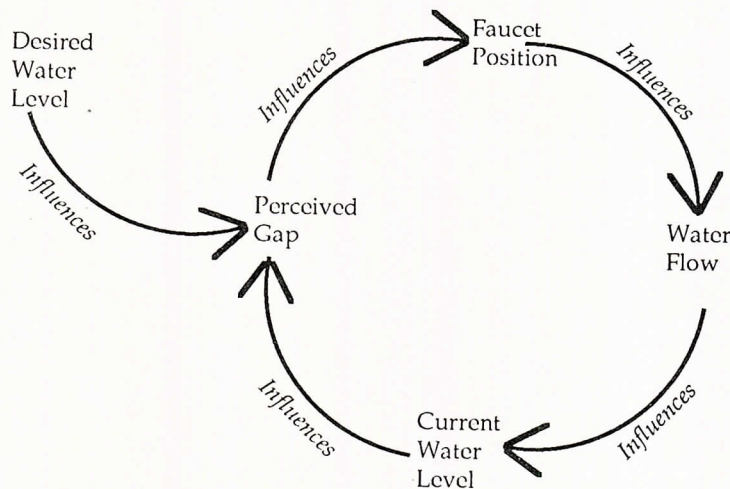
The key to seeing reality systemically is seeing circles of influence rather than straight lines. This is the first step to breaking out of the reactive mindset that comes inevitably from "linear" thinking. Every circle tells a story. By tracing the flows of influence, you can see patterns that repeat themselves, time after time, making situations better or worse.

From any element in a situation, you can trace arrows that represent influence on another element:



In the diagram to the left, the faucet position arrow points to water flow. Any change made to the faucet position will alter the flow of water. But arrows never exist in isolation.

To follow the story, start at any element and watch the action ensue, circling as the train in a toy railroad does through its recurring journey. A good place to start is with the action being taken by the decision maker:



I set the faucet position, which adjusts the water flow, which changes the water level. As the water level changes, the perceived gap (between the current and desired water levels) changes. As the gap changes, my hand's position on the faucet changes again. And so on...

When reading a feedback circle diagram, the main skill is to see the "story" that the diagram tells: how behavior (or, in a complex structure, several patterns of behavior) and how that pattern might be influenced. Here the story is filling the water glass and gradually closing down the faucet as the glass fills.

All this takes some getting used to. We are steeped in a linear language for describing our experience. We find simple statements about causality and responsibility familiar and comfortable. It is not that they must be given up, anymore than you give up English to learn French. There are many situations where simple linear descriptions suffice and looking for feedback processes would be a waste of time. But not when dealing with problems of dynamic complexity.

Feedback Processes

There are two distinct types of feedback processes: reinforcing and balancing. Reinforcing (or amplifying) feedback processes are the engines of growth. Whenever you are in a situation where things are growing, you can be sure that reinforcing feedback is at work. Reinforcing feedback can also

generate accelerating decline - a pattern of decline where small drops amplify themselves into larger and larger drops, such as the decline in bank assets when there is a financial panic.

Balancing (or stabilising) feedback operates whenever there is a goal-oriented behavior. If the goal is to be not moving, then balancing feedback will act the way the brakes in a car do. If the goal is to be moving at sixty miles per hour, then balancing feedback will cause you to accelerate to sixty but no faster. The "goal" can be an explicit target, as when a firm seeks a desired market share, or it can be implicit, such as a bad habit, which despite disavow- ing, we stick to nevertheless.

In addition, many feedback processes contain "delays," interruptions in the flow of influence which make the consequences of actions occur gradually.

THE LAWS OF SYSTEMS THINKING

1. Today's problems come from yesterday's 'solutions.'

The causes of our problems are often our own solutions to other problems in the past. A well-established firm may find that this quarter's sales are off sharply. Why? Because the highly successful rebate program last quarter led many customers to buy then rather than now. Solutions that merely shift problems from one part of a system to another often go undetected because those who 'solved' the problem are different from those who inherit the new problem.

2. The harder you push, the harder the system pushes back.

Systems thinking calls it 'compensating feedback' when the more effort you expend trying to improve matters, the more effort seems to be required. When a product loses attractiveness on the market, companies tend to push for more aggressive marketing. But this draws money away from the company, so it cuts corners to compensate. This drains money from service and leads to further loss of customers. Compensating feedback is sometimes seen as a virtue by the one caught in it: "Look how hard I am working!" Yet the very hardness of the work is contributing to the problem.

3. Behavior grows better before it grows worse.

Compensating feedback usually involves a 'delay,' a time lag between the short term benefit and the long-term disbenefit. A typical solution feels wonderful, when it first cures the symptoms. Now there is improvement; or maybe even the problem has gone away. It may be two, three, or four years before the problem returns, or some new, worse problem arrives. By that time, given how rapidly most people move from job to job, someone new is sitting in the chair.

4. The easy way out usually leads back in.

We all find comfort applying familiar solutions to problems, sticking to what we know best. Pushing harder and harder on familiar solutions, while fundamental problems persist or worsen, is a reliable indicator of nonsystematic thinking.

5. The cure can be worse than the disease.

Sometimes the easy or familiar solution is not only ineffective; sometimes it is addictive and dangerous. The long-term, most insidious consequence of applying nonsystematic solutions is increased need for more and more of the solution. In business, we engage consultants who make the company dependent on them instead of training the client managers to solve problems themselves.

6. Faster is slower.

Virtually all systems, both natural and social, have intrinsically optimal rates of growth. The optimal rate is far less than the fastest possible. This can be discouraging. But the real implications of the systems perspective are not inaction but a new type of action rooted in a new way of thinking. Systems thinking is both more challenging and more promising than our normal ways of dealing with problems.

7. Cause and effect are not closely related in time and space.

Most of us assume that cause and effect are close in time and space. If there is a problem on the manufacturing line, we look for a solution in manufacturing. If salespeople can't meet targets, we think we need new sales incentives or promotions. There is a mismatch between the nature of reality in complex systems and our ways of thinking about the reality. The first step in correcting the mismatch is to let go of the notion that cause and effect are close in time and space.

8. Small changes can produce big results — but the areas of highest leverage are often the least obvious.

Tackling difficult problems is often a matter of seeing where the high leverage lies, a change which — with a minimum of effort — would lead to lasting, significant improvement. There are no simple rules for finding high-leverage changes, but there are ways of thinking that make it more likely. Learning to see underlying 'structures' rather than 'events' is a starting point. Thinking in terms of processes of change rather than 'snapshots' is another. Understanding the forces at play in a situation is a third.

9. You can have your cake and eat it too — but not at once.

Sometimes the knottiest dilemmas, when seen from the systems viewpoint, are not dilemmas at all. They appear in a whole new light once you think of change over time. For years people thought they had to choose between low cost and high quality. They didn't realise that they could have both goals, if they were willing to wait for one while they focused on the other.

10. Dividing an elephant in half does not produce two small elephants.

Organisations have integrity. To understand the most challenging managerial issues requires seeing the whole system that generates the issues. You have to see across boundaries within the system.

11. There is no blame.

You and the cause of your problem are part of a single system. The cure lies in your relation to the whole.

BOOK REVIEW: FISHERMAN'S GUIDE

Fisherman's Guide by Robert Campbell is not a book for the casual reader. It's for those who want to explore the profound premise that Bob presents as the underlying "template" for all existence. It's a book about the way in which the universe operates, all of it, from the atomic structure and the world of quantum physics to the furthest reaches of the stars and everything in between.

I picked up the book by accident a few years ago and it has started me on an odyssey that is still continuing. As a scientist by training, I have some background in the basic world view as presented by the giants of science who have woven an intricate net of explanations, laws and theories about our world, its origins and functionings. But to read Bob's book is to come to the realisation that the net has a few holes in it, anomalies that today are causing consternations and puzzlements by leading scientists. But more on that later.

Having a few questions on some of the work presented, I wrote the publisher to forward my query to the author. Surprisingly, I got a reply from Thailand, where Bob has been living for the last 10 years. After many letters, we finally met when he flew to Bombay from Libya on his return to Bangkok. Bob is an independent oil and gas engineer who works periodically in the oil fields of the middle east. A gentle but intense man, he supports himself in order to write and explore the "System", as he calls his work.

The book is based on an experience he had over twenty years ago when he was working in Canada at a natural gas distribution company. The company was merged with another gas company and Bob found himself confronting an integration task of the parent company's desire for standardisation of procedures and forms. Attempts to document and demonstrate why the new system would not work for his company's operation were frustrated by the bureaucratic insistence of senior management of the parent firm. One member of the other company's management was Albert Low, a man doing some very interesting theoretical work on the systems of organisational structure. Together they found how each of their work on systems led to some new ways to understand the dynamics of an organisation. Then it happened.

Bob describes on his book an incredibly intense experience that is hard to comprehend, but if true, undeniably is a direct insight to the structural dynamics of the creative process that is consistent with both the traditional concepts of religion and the factual evidence of science. Without trying to rephrase the experience he relates in the book, it amounts to a direct revelation into the nature of existence, the key to the creative process and the

direct perception of, what one would call in any tradition, God. One is left with but one of two possibilities; either he is a fantasiser of monumental delusion, or, he has a direct insight of a key understanding for our time.

Shortly after the experience he left the company and has, for the last 20 years, been working on the intricacies, dynamics and applications of the System, especially in the fields of the human nervous system, astronomy, cosmology, mathematics and, where I got intrigued, the functioning of an organisation.

Obviously a subject that is this fundamental and so universally applicable is not easy to understand or present in a short review. Bob is the first to admit that the book is difficult to digest and the System's ramifications for the functioning of all things challenges much of today's widely-held beliefs. But nevertheless he has done a fine job in guiding the reader step by step into the foundation and evolution of the System. It is helped by the fact that he uses the medium of a fishing trip as a counterpoint to his technical explanations of the System. Through Bob's insight into the natural intuitive processes of experience, the reader can grasp the underlying operation of the System without having to fully grasp all the details of its operation.

The System starts with an understanding that the creative process is based on unity, or oneness, that reconciles the fundamental dilemma of the relationship of two dimensions, one implicit and one explicit. "The dilemma arises from the need to reconcile the internal, or **implicit** aspects of experience, with the external, or **explicit** aspects. A creative reconciliation of these two poles must be communicative. It must embrace both polar aspects within a common framework of understanding."

Symbolically this is illustrated by the "centre" and the "periphery" of a circle. The centre representing the implicit knowing of experience and the periphery representing the explicit knowing of experience. Neither can be known to the exclusion of the other, the one owes its existence to its relationship to the other. Their interaction is communicative and basic to the creative process of all things. There is a universal framework to understanding.

For example, each of us when we stand on the periphery of a circle can see the uniqueness of ourselves and every other human being. When we look to the centre, we experience the universal oneness that is in each individual. This communicative dilemma, the oneness of all, and at the same time, the uniqueness of all, is an experience of the System.

This creative dilemma has been expressed in many forms throughout history and is the basis for the mystical insights of the pyramids, early Christi-

anity, Stonehenge, Sufi masters and many other examples.

At the heart of the System is an intuitive understanding that all of the universe, in all its evolved forms, from the quantum frames of the atomic structure to the vast whirling of the solar system and galaxies is a living, communicative system that is universally synchronised. There is a universal hierarchy to experience. A creative process is working itself out through a complex, but discernable pattern of mentation. The universe is truly and profoundly alive!

Creative energies give form to idea and direction to knowledge.

Conscious energies give form to knowledge and direction to routine.

Sensitive energies give form to routine and direction to body movement.

Vital energies give form to body form and direction to molecular structure.

The System progressively unfolds in a natural progression into higher forms, with each subsequent System 3,4,5 etc., subsumed by the one before it, and all relating to the basic System 2, the centre-periphery creative dilemma, in a self-consistent elaboration of the nature of experience. In System 3, the understanding of how space and time are generated is detailed. In System 4, the basic operations of a cell, a nervous system or an organisation is explained. Larger, more complex operations are parts of System 5 and beyond.

The understanding of a living, creative process for all things with a universal (God) principle foundational to all existence is beyond science's willingness to accept. For them there are universal laws, but not universal mentation. The universe evolved from a "Big Bang" and all things are working themselves out from that through an amazing set of fortuitous "accidents" and physical selections; but certainly not a creative intelligent system. In the book, Bob uses an imaginary conversation between Sherlock Holmes (the rational scientist) and Watson (the skeptical inquirer of existing contradictions) to walk one through the halls of science's understanding of how things happen.

But the mathematical explanations and the search for understanding of the nature of our universe run into unresolvable contradictions at the atomic and galactic extremes. The System accounts for these anomalies in a coherent manner and shows how and why our present explanations are deficient, including the necessity for a "Big Bang".

The reason the System can be known is because we have evolved through it. Our brains, the nervous

system and our mentation processes function as the System. Three sets of relationships exist through the three parts of our brain, the left, right and limbic system which are intimately associated with the autonomic nervous system. Each set consists of two polar relationships that are communicative in a centre-periphery relationship. Together they provide the means for integrating the intuitive dimension (right hemisphere of the brain), rational-linguistic expressive dimension (left hemisphere of the brain) with our emotional apparatus (the limbic system) which

anchors us to our natural heritage. Thus we know, remember, and respond to experience. We make sense of our world.

System 4 is the result of four centres relating to each other in a universal hierarchy. The book describes in detail the functioning of each of the nine possible relationships that four centres can have to each other. Each represents a critical part of how the creative process happens, whether that be in the brain, a nerve cell firing or in a company. In each case the process is the same. They operate in a universal hierarchy of delegation, each with a distinctly different kind of work.

1. *Managerial work* gives form to idea and direction to the whole. Only the managing director does this level.
2. *Administrative work* gives form to knowledge and direction to routine within the constraints of the company idea.
3. *Supervisory work* gives specific form to routine through organising and committing basic resources.
4. *Functional work* gives ultimate form to resources through applied technique.

Underlying the evolving pattern of the System is a realisation that the history of mankind is not unlike the evolving of the human nervous system and the brain. It is as if the two hemispheres of our planet have evolved the development of the two sides of our collective mentation. The West has evolved the rational left side of it and the East has evolved the intuitive "spiritual insight" side of it. We are poised at the next step in the evolutionary journey of collective consciousness, the necessity of integrating these two independently functioning systems on a higher level. Indeed, until this "bridging" of East and West hap-

pens, we will not be able to effectively be the stewards of our planet. Bob lays out this imperative at the end of his book. He illustrates how the evolving species develops higher levels of consciousness, creative reflux, and how one needs to practice the disciplines associated with realising and integrating this higher level.

"There is a certain analogue between the human social situation and that of insects. Insects live in an invertebrate jungle, the second major tier in the biospheric hierarchy. On a treadmill of activity determined by their species, they lack a capacity to individually reflect, as minnows do. The third-tier vertebrates are able to integrate patterns of activity in a socially more meaningful way. Humans are the fourth tier in the hierarchy, but there are four tiers within the human tier that are associated with the development and use of language. This delegation in tiers includes also the evolution of ideas, the manner in which thought is organised.

The first human tier has been worked out at a functional level of understanding through a diversity of languages and cultures. It is with the second-tier development of ideas, those that exert control over resources, that man's jungle instincts have come to the fore in grand fashion. Over the past few centuries this has blossomed to global proportions as man has explored all manner of organised ideas in technology, applying them to more and more sophisticated machines. The development has in fact been characterised by a competition for survival in a jungle of ideas. Behind every idea stand people with a social commitment that is often less than sociable, often hostile to the point of oppression, insurrection, revolution, genocide, or war. There are no doubt some who would throw their full support behind a nuclear holocaust. Human beings are not the masters of ideas but their slaves.

We are like insects searching through the darkness for identity in the light of objective circumstance. We look for it in ideas - or reactions to them - of every kind. The list is very long: a capitalist ideal, a communist cause, a nationalist dream, a liberation front, an Islamic revolution, a Christian or a Zionist extreme, a cult, a movement, a far-out lifestyle, a work ethic, a cop-out, a self-indulgent pursuit, an ascetic discipline, whatever. The point is that we commit ourselves to organisations, not just through organisations, and this includes organisations of all sorts, even systems of ideas organised into sciences. We work for them, believe in them, strive for them, sacrifice for them, sometimes even kill or die for them.

There is no escape from the need to organise our thoughts and activities. We are biologically structured to reflux, refine, and project energies according to how we think and behave. What we have not yet begun to recognise is the need to reflect on the nature

of organization itself. We have not yet begun to reflect on the system, and the relationship of each to all. Our organisations are structured in such a way that we commit ourselves to each as opposed to all. In order to refine and project energies at the administrative level of delegation, we must perform a metamorphosis from insects into minnows. This entails the reflux and restructuring of ideas in such a way that we can apprehend the nature of the social mystery.

Three disciplines are implicitly involved. In particular, this requires attention to our sciences, to the physical and intellectual discipline, from the perspective of the other two, the moral and spiritual disciplines. We are morally responsible for our behavior through technology, and the dangers of denying a place to spiritual insight are already far too apparent. The two hemispheres of the new brain must learn to work in concert if we are to contribute to the music of the biosphere."

Reviewed by Jack Gilles

Campbell, Robert, *Fisherman's Guide: A Systems Approach to Creativity and Organisation*, New Science Library, Shambala, Boston and London, 1985

WE ARE TRANSMITTERS

*As we live, we are transmitters of life.
And when we fail to transmit life, life fails to flow
through us.*

*That is part of the mystery of sex, it is a flow onwards.
Sexless people transmit nothing.*

*And if, as we work, we can transmit life into our work,
life, still more life, rushes into us to compensate, to be
ready and we ripple with life through the days.*

*Even if it is a woman making an apple dumpling, or a
man a stool,
content is the woman, with fresh life rippling in to her,
content is the man.*

*Give, and it shall be given unto you
is still the truth about life.
But giving life is not so easy.
It doesn't mean handing it out to some mean fool, or
letting the living dead eat you up.
It means kindling the life-quality where it was not,
even if it's only in the whiteness of a washed pocket-
handkerchief.*

- D.H. Lawrence

THE SYSTEM IN BUSINESS - Robert Campbell

Albert Low's "structure/process" is an accurate evaluation of a business organization as a communications system. It applies equally well to any company. It is, in fact, a simplified representation of the system adapted to a business organisation. The system itself, however, is universal. It may be applied to anything and everything.

Albert recognized that there are certain regions of activity that always apply to any business organisation, and that these regions are not just arbitrary divisions of work. Each is a distinctly independent region of activity, although they are all relevant to the operation of a company as a whole.

All companies are involved in selling a product or a service of some kind. All companies are involved in a production activity associated with their product. All companies are involved with financing their activity. All companies are involved with structuring and staffing their organisations. All companies are involved with assessing market needs and opportunities. All companies are involved with developing product ideas. The words and descriptions may change slightly, but these same six regions always apply to any company.

There are only six regions and there are always six regions, although the extent of delegation depends on the size of the company. In a one-man business, all six regions exist within one man. Delegation does not occur in all six regions until a four-level organisation is reached. At that point, two or three thousand employees may be involved.

Three of the six regions may be called structural dimensions, since they each interface with a different structured environment. The other three regions may be termed process dimensions, since they each prescribe a process relating to one of the structural dimensions. The three structural dimensions are:

1. **Marketing**, which relates to the customer in the structured environment of commerce and the market.
2. **Treasury**, which relates to the stockholder in the structured environment of finance.
3. **Organisation and Manning**, which relates to the employee in the structured environment of crafts and professions.

The center of gravity of each of these regions is environmental to the company. The customer seeks the greatest quality for the least price; the stockholder seeks the greatest return for the least risk; the employee seeks the greatest remuneration for the best conditions. Each of these regions is of equal importance to the company; none can exist without the others. They also represent conflicting interests that

exert a centrifugal influence on the company, tending to pull it apart.

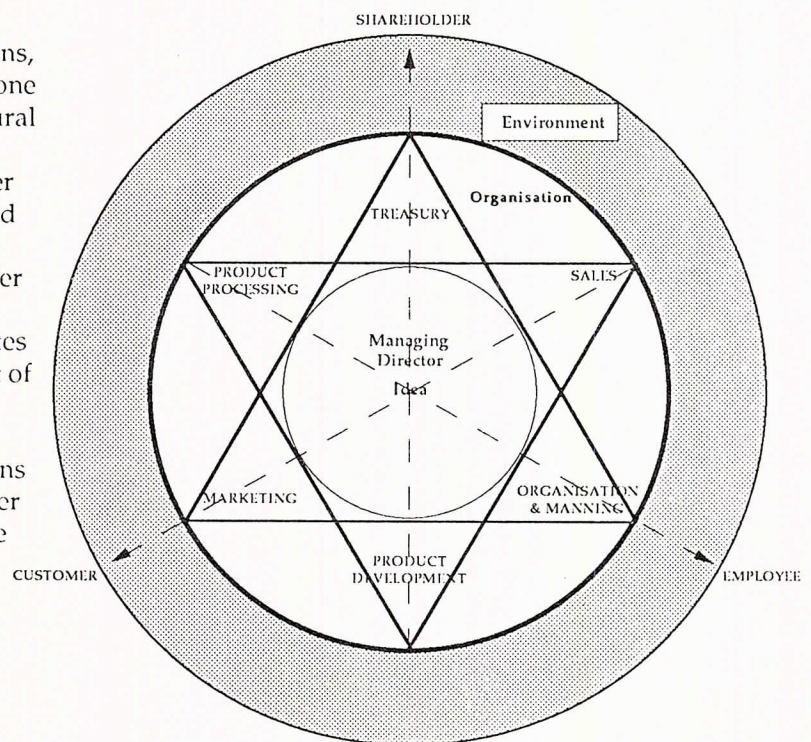
The three process dimensions are:

1. **Sales**, which takes place within the context of the customer's needs as they are assessed by marketing. Marketing is not itself concerned with selling.
2. **Product development**, which takes place within the context of the resource capacity of the company as it is determined by treasury.
3. **Product processing**, which takes place within the context of the organisation structure as it is determined and staffed by organisation and manning. This latter region is most often referred to as the personnel function, but it goes beyond usual personnel policies.

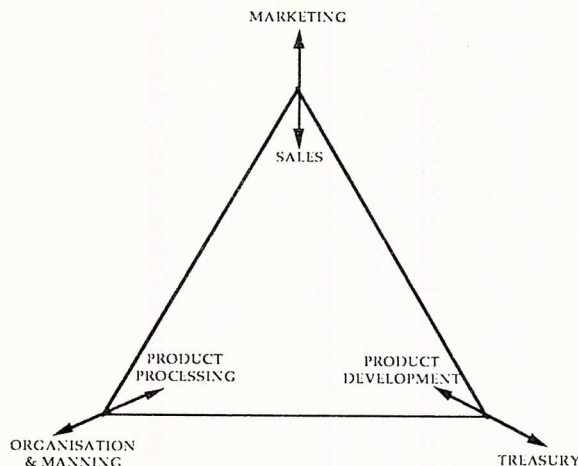
The three process dimensions all have a direct common concern with product activity - with developing, making, and selling a product. This exerts a centripetal influence on the company and tends to pull it together.

It can be seen that the three process dimensions function within the context of the three structural dimensions. In other words, the structural dimensions provide the behavioral space for the process dimensions.

Together, the six regions generate a state of tension in the field of the company. The managing director is responsible for maintaining the balance in the field. Albert illustrated this tension and balance with two overlapping triangles as shown in the diagram below.



A company can also be illustrated as three polar relationships of centre to periphery. The six regions are related in pairs. Each pair represents a centre-periphery polarity that provides for structural insight into the relevant process of the company. In each case, the process dimension is central to the peripheral structural dimension. Insight is possible only through these polarities. The point can be emphasised a little more as follows:



1 **Sales** must be geared to meet market demands. **Marketing** is concerned with the assessment of the customer's needs as they are expressed in the marketplace and therefore with determining market potential and trends. This assessment may disclose a need for more and better products, for a change in emphasis as between quality and price, or for a change in emphasis on product lines as the demand for some products falls away in favor of others. The sales-marketing polarity thus presents an insight into the effectiveness of sales as it relates to market potential. The sales effort may be inadequate, excessive, or misplaced. Or it may be that product changes are called for from product development and product processing.

2 **Product development** must evolve within the context of the resource capacity of the company, as reflected by the **treasury**. There is an evolving product theme to a company that is expressed by its expertise in certain product lines. This is reflected in the productive resources of the company: in its assets, operating budget, and balance sheet. The evolution of the product theme must be reasonably consistent with the company's history of success as indicated by these resources. For instance, it is out of the question for a private machine shop to undertake the development of a new automobile, but it may be practical for it to develop certain automobile parts. Available resources must not be strained to the breaking point, yet advantage should be taken of

available resource potential. This is seen through the polar relationship between product development and treasury.

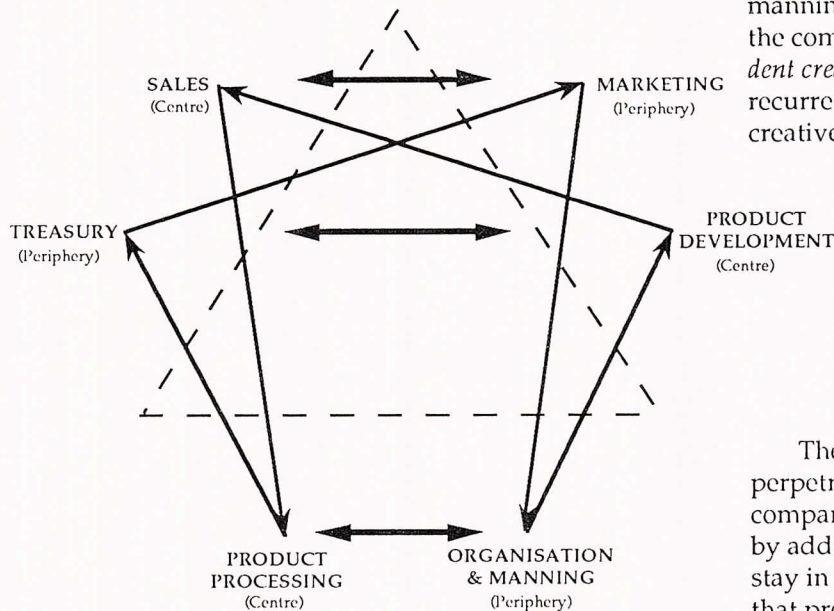
3 **Product processing** is the production of the goods or services associated with the product idea. The effectiveness of this region is always seen in polar contrast to **organisation and manning**. When things are not running smoothly or effectively, the reason must be sought in the organisation structure. There may be a problem with the structure itself, with the personnel performance within the structure, or with both. An important point here is that the whole organisational structure is involved. An organisation is a communications system that will function or malfunction according to the way it is structured, even if it is staffed with the most competent people available. The impact is always felt by product processing, which must carry the burden of productive efficiency for the whole company.

These three polarities introduce a very basic structural constraint into the organization of any company. The delegation of authority by the managing director should always be undertaken separately in each of the six regions. This may be called the "first structural constraint."

Each of the six regions must be independently organised in order to maintain the three polarities that provide for insight into the structural dynamics of the company. In a one-man company, this is done in one man's mind. As authority is delegated, the managing director must still maintain the balance of tensions in the field. To do this, he must continue to see each of the six regions as being structurally distinct. If two regions are delegated to one person, the managing director loses direct experience of the communicative relationship between those two regions. Instead, he or she must depend on secondhand information that is colored by someone in a specially privileged position. The resulting imbalance will also prejudice feedback from the other regions. The distorted communicative tensions in the company will preclude a balanced perspective for everyone involved.

The three polarities are the headlights of the company; they illuminate the road through a fluctuating landscape of circumstance. They permit adjustments to be made in speed and direction to safely navigate the turns and avoid the hazards, but there must also be only one driver at the master controls. If his sight is impaired, the frantic shouts of the crew will do little to ensure a safe journey.

The mediating triangle is related to the three polarities of the six-pointed figure that cross the medial axis as illustrated below. Taking the polarities one at a time from the top, they can be



interpreted as follows:

1 The sales/marketing polarity provides for a *renewed perception of the field* through recurrent cycles of performance. The value inherent in the productive effort of the company is perceived in the marketplace through product acceptance. The resultant feedback not only sustains the company, but also gives it direction in subsequent cycles, to promote a continuing perceptual renewal. The polarity corresponds to the means term of the mediating activity, which acts as a perceptual axis for a company.

2 The product-development/treasury polarity provides for the *transference of idea* through resource commitment to product development. Money defies definition in physical terms, but it is more than paper and numbers. It simulates a communicative void that links a company to a wider economic environment, allocating a freedom to act that has been earned through recurrent cycles of experience. In this context it reflects a capacity to perform. Although this capacity is manifest as form in the extent of facilities and trained personnel, the treasury, by its fiscal policy, mirrors the collective idea of these resources. Fiscal policy does not generate wealth; it makes possible the development of ideas into viable products that can find acceptance in the market-

place. This polarity is communicative, concerned with the transference of idea. It corresponds to the goal term of the mediating activity, representing an identity in emptiness.

3 The product-processing/organisation-and-manning polarity represents the corporate body of the company in action. This in itself is an *independent creation* of the company that evolves through recurrent cycles of production, embodying the creative capacity of the company. It is the physical form of the company, the land, buildings, equipment, and people, assembled together in a structured, creative undertaking. This polarity corresponds to the consequence term of the mediating activity, representing an identity in form.

There is a popular myth that is fervently perpetrated in business circles: the goal of a company is to make a profit. It is usually justified by adding that without a profit a company cannot stay in business. No reasonable person will argue that profit is not essential to the survival of a company, but how does that make it a goal? The intent of a goal is to provide an integrating purpose or intelligent direction to some kind of activity. In the case of a company this means bringing together large numbers of people with diverse interests and skills to participate in concert to realise the goal. The idea implicit in the goal is what must integrate the diversity of their numbers.

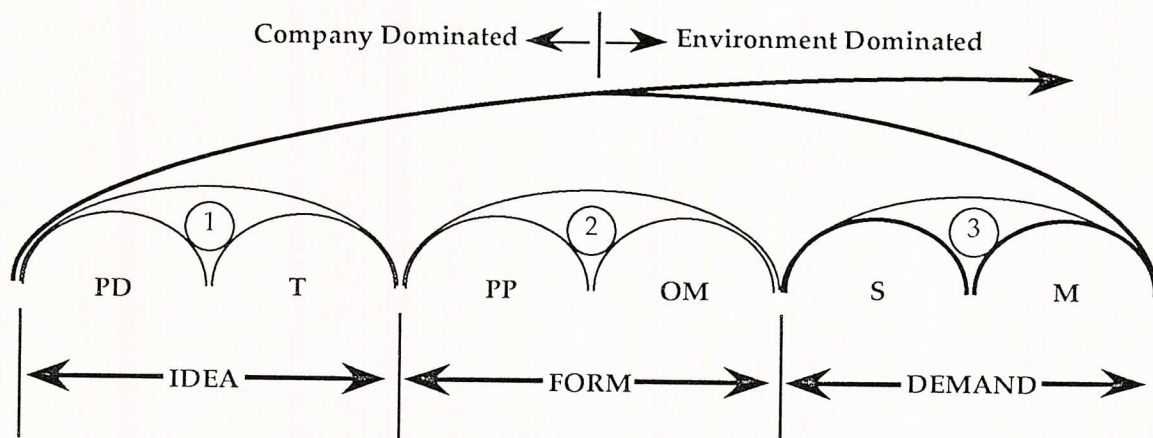
One must then ask, what is the idea implicit in profit? If we are to make it, we must know what it is. We can make a chair, build a house, manufacture a car, fix a television set, because there is a clear idea implicit in these things. How do you make a profit? How are people to relate to the idea of profit in such a way that it will bring about the concerted activity of a company? Does anyone seriously believe that one man will willingly work for another man's wealth at the expense of his own? How are people to think or understand their place in order to make a contribution to such a goal? What is the idea implicit in profit?

There is no integrating idea implicit in profit, because profit is not a goal. The goal of a company is given in the idea of its product; this integrates the structured activity of a company. The goal is communicative; it must fulfill a market need.

Profit is earned as a consequence of making a contribution of value to the market. Through the recommitment of profit in recurrent cycles, a company evolves both its products and its capacity to produce them. Profit thus becomes vested in the

corporate body of a company, sustaining it in a state of renewal that is tailored to current creative needs. Profit is the freedom and capacity of a company to create; it says little about how this freedom should be exercised. It is a mute potential to act. The survival of a company is ensured not through the accumulation of wealth, but by giving expression to its potential through a responsive commitment to the market.

Albert also illustrated the six regions of a company in a way that defines the product as an *idea* in a *form* with a *demand*, as shown below.



Each of the three polarities indicated in capitals gives significance to one of the words *idea*, *form*, and *demand*, respectively. Thus the goal implicit in the product is also implicitly defined by the six regions of activity that constitute the whole company. Value is therefore *always* perceived through polar balances that by their nature preclude a place for profit maximization.

Each polar pair gives an insight to the Managing Director. The **Sales - Marketing** polarity communicates the **Performance** of the company. The **Treasury - Product Processing** communicates the **Potential** of the company. The **Product Processing - Organisation and Manning** communicates the **Commitment** of the company.

It is safe to say that nothing contributes more to lower profits and higher costs than campaigns for profit maximisation and its companion, cost reduction. Both of these ideals, like so many ideals, introduce disruptive imbalances and a futile chase after a will-o'-the-wisp. Nevertheless, many people extol the merits of profit as a motive. Some even attempt to equate profit incentive with free enterprise, or inflate it into a basis for human values.

Unfortunately, it doesn't end with a harmless

myth. The enshrinement of the profit motive invites an army of social and political reactions and counteridealisms. The energies that are so fervently projected in the futile chase must find an equally futile reactionary balance. This is demanded by the nature of the dilemma, the ultimate toll being exacted in human suffering.

There is neither virtue nor evil in profit. It simply provides a certain freedom to act in an economic and social context. How that freedom is exercised is the crux of human values. This is an individual dilemma, a function of the perceptual capacity of people and the sense of responsibility

that goes with it. It is not something that can be easily acquired by the ready adoption of a set of principles of thought or behavior. Rather, it is earned through an effort of search and careful self-observation. It comes from profit of another kind.

Yet the profit mentality persists. The reason lies in objective frameworks of understanding and the deficient language that ensues. A clear perception of the polarities involved is lost. The implicit pole of the dilemma is masked; in its place, an emotional need is experienced to endlessly compensate in direct experience. Around and around the vicious circle goes.

An Interview with Bob Campbell (Continued from page 19)

These things can be worked out, and it is demanding in that it requires a lot of personal reflection. The ideas and categories are contextual; there are no absolute meanings assigned to words so that everything requires a degree of interpretation every time the context shifts. This makes it difficult and, to some extent, illusive. Nevertheless, if you persist with it you will see the relevance of it in whatever context you look.

CONSULTATION -THE SYSTEM

The first Systems Consult was held in April 1992, with an engineering firm headquartered in Pune. The organisation had grown over many years to one in which a diverse product line was being manufactured in several locations, new, unrelated businesses were being developed, and the organisation had grown to over 4,000 employees. Although there were no obvious problems in the functioning of the organisation, there was a recognition that the competitive marketplace, the need for effective and fast decision making, rapid growth and diversification and the introduction of new technologies would require the organisation to function with maximum efficiency and effectiveness.

There was some indication that all was not well with the systems of the organisation. An earlier consultation revealed a general feeling of frustration because of an "organisational labyrinth", "poor production planning", "over ambitious targets" and "diverse perceptions of the organisation's goals". The System Consult programme was considered as a means of getting an insight into how things are presently functioning and what an ideal structure might be. No assumptions or commitments were made on implementation of change.

The Consult Design

The consult consisted of three parts. The first part was working on a hypothetical model based on the present organisation structure and on a preliminary description of the production flow at the major production location. This involved several days of work with Bob Campbell in Thailand to outline a typical four level manufacturing organisation based on the principles of the System. This was followed by

an on-site examination of the production process in the plant. The System is a guide to flexibly structuring an organisation so that each employee can make an independent creative input to the work. Each company will have a unique design, based on its needs.

The second part was a two day consultation with managers representing the six regions of the company, Manufacturing (Product Processing-PP), Personnel (Organisation and Manning-OM), Finance (Treasury-T), Engineering (Product Development-PD), Sales-S, and Marketing-M. The Supervisory level (see page 10 for descriptions of the four levels) was the critical level of managers through which the actual day-to-day coordination of activities of the company could be analysed. It is through this level that anomalies become most apparent. In these two days we collectively examined the present process and procedures and, after familiarising the participants with the basics of The System, shared with them the hypothetical model worked out by Bob and myself. Finally we compared and reconciled, or noted, the differences between the two.

The third part occurred one week later over an additional two days and involved the participants working on selected job descriptions of immediate subordinates and an analysis of the communication processes within the company, both formal and informal. An additional amount of time was devoted to enabling the participants to appreciate the universal application of The System and its working within a human being and other areas.

As outlined in Fisherman's Guide, the System is a way not only to structure an organisation so that the Managing Director has a clear perception into the

Supervisory Level Sub-Regions	Example of a Description of Supervisory Level PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT REGION
PP- DESIGN	Developing completely new products including the facilities and technology for their production, all of which may lead the company in diverse directions in response to market opportunities.
OM- SCHEDULING	Scheduling the development and implementation of completely new product plans, including such things as land procurement, plant construction, developing new organizations and the like.
PD-RESEARCH	Implementing pure research projects in various areas, investigating such things as completely new ideas, materials, designs and technologies.
T- PROJECT COSTING	Projecting the development, production and other costs associated with completely new products under development and preparing budgets accordingly.
S- CUSTOMER LIAISON	Reviewing completely new products under development with potential customers in coordination with sales.
M- TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT	Continually monitoring and assessing the development of new technology and manufacturing techniques in the industry at large.

heart of the organisation's functioning, but a way to enable each person to be able to make an independent and creative contribution. Because our own individual creative efforts reflect the same System, when the organisation is structured correctly, we have a natural "resonance" between ourselves and the organisation. People may not be able to articulate it, but there is a sense of well-being and worth for everyone.

The Results

One of the first things that became evident was that the time allotted for our familiarisation with the manufacturing process was inadequate. We should have spent two or three days reviewing in-depth the work of each of the major section heads. Much time was necessary in the consult to enable us to understand the "why" behind many of the procedures. A half-day tour is not enough time to spot the "knots" in the process. However, the participants did comment that being forced to explain all these details helped them get new clarity and insight to their process. People not directly involved in the processes also appreciated the explanations.

Over the four days we carefully examined the manufacturing process with attention given to each management job, what it entailed, who they reported to and why. Slowly the participants began to appreciate how the System informed how the organisation needs to be structured and where some of the anomalies are. Below are some examples of the issues that emerged.

Structural Constraints

We focused most of our attention on the **Product Processing Region** of the major manufacturing facility. Analysis indicates that the whole company is at least a four level organisation, and it may be verging on a five level organisation. The Marketing Region, as it relates to the whole company, is not clearly delegated. It appears evident that the **OM Region (Personnel)** needs to be integrated at the Administrative level. Someone needs to carefully follow the structural evolution of the company and its manning at a senior level. This does not mean having someone dictating new structures and reporting lines, but that someone intimately familiar with the current organisation needs to lend intelligent guidance to its evolution with an appreciation for the structural constraints, while working hand-in-hand with all levels of management concerned. For this to be effective, it requires some degree of familiarity with the System by those Regions being directly affected.

A longer range question is involved in the role of Quality Control which is now treated essentially as a

separate engineering section. In light of the System, quality is not a separate Region, but is an intimate responsibility of each of the six Regions. It may break out as a distinct auditing function within any region to ensure the development of product or service quality. It is not a violation of the System to have a functional service separated, but care must be made not to develop an independent structure. The same is true also of Data Processing. In a general sense, the overall issue of quality rests heavily on the **OM Region**, since quality is a direct result of people's commitment, skill and placement within the organisation structure.

We are aware of the present emphasis and customer concern on independent quality assurance within the company. It should, however, be a temporary design, with effort to integrate, as much as possible, the Quality Assurance into the direct responsibility of those doing the work and its supervision. Statistical analysis could be a separate service, but goals and solutions need to be within the Region. Part of the contradiction lies in giving the Production heavy measurement parameters on quantity, perhaps overriding quality targets.

In our work on job descriptions with the participants, it became clear that work is needed to enable them to fully understand what complete delegation (stewardship) involves. That is, although a person filling a post may not be able to fully handle the job and presently needs to be monitored in his decisions by a superior, emphasis should be on fully developing the person so that a more direct reporting (as discerned through the System) can function. This could lead to eventual elimination of some levels and quicker responsive execution.

There is a need for those at the Supervisory level to more clearly understand and spell out job responsibilities and authorities. Most of the participants understood financial and personnel authorities, but did not fully spell out delegation of necessary job related authorities.

Consult Reflections

Perhaps the single most helpful insight that occurred during the four days of the Consult was the deep appreciation of how a corporation can be structured so that the creative process can happen in such a way that every person can make his/her independent contribution. A profound obligation lies with those in senior positions, from the Managing Director, through the heads of the six Administrative Regions and orchestrated by those at the Supervisory level, to function in such a way that the creative process can happen, for each and all. It becomes a sacred trust, and those promoted to such positions need to have the spiritual capacity, along with the knowledge capacity, to care for its unfolding.

AN INTERVIEW WITH BOB CAMPBELL

Is there a model of a company operating with the "system" so one could see how they benefitted from it?

B.C. I doubt if there is a company with four levels in the whole world that is operating consistently with the six independent regions and the four levels of delegation. That is kind of dispiriting to realise that nowhere is there any four-level company that is actually functioning this way. There are three-level companies operating, but they are much easier to operate. There is a magnitude of difference in complexity between a three and four-level company. It becomes dramatically different when you get to a five-level company.

Where then does one look for models?

B.C. The places to look are in our own body and in the evolution of the species. In a creative process it helps to have an analogy to draw from.

A four level organisation certainly works in nature and over and over again you can see the evolutionary pattern. To put it in a broader perspective, for thousands and thousands of years the evolution of societies has taken place through great strife and sufferings as one culture rises through conflicts and wars and another is destroyed. Different cultural patterns have developed all over the world, a different mind-set associated with each one of them.

At some point, for whatever reason, just a hundred years ago came this thing called technology and western science. This scientific revolution which resulted in an industrial revolution, gave us an insight into many physical processes, insights into the law of gravity and the motion of the planets. Scientific insights always come related to our solar system, to how it works. Kepler, Copernicus, Newton, Descartes - all developed their insights looking at the planets, the solar system, and then a mathematics to deal with the coordinate systems. From that has come an appreciation of the laws of physics, and so forth. We have all this scientific technology which is really an insight into the **routines** of physics in nature. It is the causal routines that is our level of understanding today and which has evolved in the last hundred years, even though it was essentially stagnant for thousands of years prior. Granted, there were civilisations that grew in the Nile Valley and the Indus Valley. Perhaps these were the two focal points where civilisation spawned. Also you would have to include Mesopotamia and the Yellow River Valley in China. These four centres were the centres of culture that evolved and developed.

But then along came a few people in Europe with a left-brained function based on ideas on the nature of the physical order that were spawned in Greece 2500 years ago. I think the ideas initially were developed in the Indus Valley, then came to

the eastern Mediterranean. Early Greek philosophy was very much in tune with early Vedic thought. At some point along came a man named Euclid with a geometry that had existed for 2,000 years which had built the pyramids. Euclid got hold of geometry and systematised it in terms of an externalised logic and closed the door on the 'sacred' geometries that had existed previously. Aristotle turned Greek philosophy around 180 degrees to make it explicit. There is an explicit order - an object 'is what it is, in and of itself'. It's external - there is no **subjective** aspect to experience. The whole appeal to the intuition, the right-brained approach, that had been developed for several thousands of years in the Indus Valley was completely turned around in the West. Those concepts then became translated into Europe and a left-brained growth of technology, the move westward and the discovery of the new world happened.

What does this mean for today?

B.C. We have moved from a cultural, functional level up to a **supervisory** level in terms of dealing with life on the planet and the economic monolith that we now find ourselves in. We are in an international community, but we are functioning on a supervisory level of understanding. The whole world is functioning this way - the world of trade, commerce and industry. It is a science that is built on an externalised view of how the natural order works. You operate with 'this causes that to happen' and we have an explicit science.

It is a bit like the invertebrate jungle. All the insects are going around in various patterns and they are eating each other and eating everything else. It's a jungle out there. So how can the world keep going in this consumption/production cycle, competing itself to death, destroying the planet. We're destroying our humanity in many respects. Reality isn't just out there; there's an internal aspect to this whole thing. In order to reintegrate this process there has to be another level of understanding evolved that is more fundamental. But to move up to the **administrative** level of comprehension necessarily involves an insight into the structural dynamics of the creative process. If we can't see this in a way that isn't just externalised, that also takes into account a subjective aspect to experience, an aspect where we are participants in the creative process and that there is some karmic result to our actions, then what are we going to do to the planet, ourselves and to everything else?

How does knowing the System help this dilemma?

B.C. If we can get an insight into the creative dynamics of this process then we benefit not only the company, we benefit ourselves and the world at large. That's the whole contextual framework within which these ideas were developed. It was to help people be more responsive within the organisation's structure, to see in themselves that they are making a contribu-

tion in relation to the whole world and that everyone profits. We need empathy for a fellow human being in the workplace based on mutual respect for making an independent contribution to a role within a structured context that can be in harmony with this incredible living form that has evolved on this planet over a period of four billion years.

What are the implications for the worker and for the company of which he is a part?

B.C. The four levels of an organisation begins with the *idea* which goes to the administrative level, which is giving form to *knowledge*, which then gives form to *routine* and which gives form to *form*. The man in the plant who is giving form to form, if all he has is a blueprint which he is following - the verbalised or written instruction - and nothing else is coming with that - then somebody above him has blocked the essence that he needs. All of a sudden, being a supervisor of routine takes on very important significance. We need to stand in some degree of humility everyday realising that we are going to take human expenditure, a person's energies in life, and ask them, direct them, to put it in this form. There is a stewardship to being a boss and seeing that creative person, not in a hierarchical level, but as a person who is the culmination of the whole process. The people who are giving the final form are the embodiment of the idea. Therefore everything, if done right, must come through that person. Not just the blueprint, although the blueprint ought to be an embodiment of that spirit also. Therefore the people who are on the line, the ones actually doing that functional work are the culmination of the whole process and there needs to be a feedback process back to the origination of 'how is the form?' "I did not make it," says the Managing Director. This guy made it through a couple of levels of delegation where a creative process is going on. But how did it go? Is it an embodiment of everything we stand for, believe in, all the values? Is it there? Was that translated? The way you will know is if it was structured correctly so that feedback comes.

How can you be sure it will work this way?

B.C. There is an isomorphy of structure that occurs again and again in the same structure so that if we misstructure something, then the way the whole cosmic movie is being projected, the communicative forces can serve to distort it. We feel this intuitively. If the thing is structured so that it is isomorphic, or the same structural dynamics are at work within the organisation as are at work within the biosphere or the whole world we relate to, then intuitively one feels more a part of the whole. This is just a spontaneous thing. He feels the whole responsiveness of the organisation as he does his job. Each person feels they are in tune with the evolution of the planet, nature, of life and it feels more meaningful.

If you ask the worker he may only verbalise it as a feeling of enjoying working in the place. There is a resonance here, even in the smallest kind of physical work. There is a recognition that he is contributing even though he doesn't know the hierarchy of the structure, or the struggle going on in the larger picture. He just knows that there is a harmony and that harmony is being reflected in his own commitment of his life to the job.

This is related to the struggle of writing down a job description. It is as if those of us who don't actually do the physical work are the transmitters of life. Whatever life this idea has will pass through our minds and our creative organisation and be transmitted to the person in its essence so that he can actually put the life of this own life together, bringing the two together, into its ultimate form. *How was your work with the system initiated?*

B. C. This work came out of a conflict in a business. It was born through a political struggle in a company I used to work for in Canada. This company was taken over by a much larger parent organisation. The total number of employees including the parent company were about 4,000 people. There were 3,400 in the parent organisation and I was working in the small organisation which consisted of 600 people. At the time of the take-over process our small company was structured well. It was a three-level organisation. Things fell into place much easier, everybody knew everyone and there was a great spirit of cooperation. Once it was taken over by the parent company, they wanted to superimpose a standardised system of doing everything. This conflict grew over a period of several years to the point where it consumed half the attention of everybody in both companies.

Out of that experience was born an insight into the structural dynamics of the creative process. That larger company ended up not imposing its will on the smaller company, in fact, adopting many of the modes of organisation of the smaller company. So, I suppose about twenty-five years ago, this was the first place where these ideas were initiated and applied. In the intervening period I have worked with various other companies and reflected on this matter of organisation structure throughout the whole period and in every branch of science and philosophy. The pattern is there throughout the whole thing.

What we are talking about here, while not an exact science, is the rudiment of structure that can find pragmatic application in an organisation if it is intelligently applied and if we impartially examine how things are done within our own departments with respect for everyone that is in that department as they have to perform their job.

(Continued on page 15)

FROM THE UNIT TO THE SYSTEM: THE

*Train your heart to govern as spacious an arena as it can;
and to encompass, through as many centuries as possible,
the onward march of humankind.*

*It is our duty, therefore, to grasp that vision which can
embrace and harmonize these two enormous, timeless and
indestructible forces, and with this vision to modulate our
thinking and our action.*

—Kazantzakis, *Saviours of God*

The New Myth's Appearance

The new myth, alluded to a decade ago, is coming into its own, disclosing itself to an increasing number of writers, whether they be scientists, futurists, sociologists, mystics or journalists. Whereas its scientific content is commonplace, its emphasis has shifted dramatically from what we have assumed.

By "myth", I mean to refer to a picture of the world ("weltbild") that includes scientific findings, but also includes a complexity of values, methods and assumptions that more or less cohere with each other. It is not simply a story, though often in history a story has served as the paradigm and the vehicle of communication for the myth. The Christian story, for example, during the Middle Ages in Europe served as a vehicle that held together science, ethics, philosophy, and politics in a more or less harmonious whole. These other fields were all judged by the parameters held in the story, and to go beyond those bounds was anathema.

Today observers of and activists in the social scene are increasingly giving vent to insights that seem to come from the same source. In her catalogue of movements from some years ago, Marilyn Ferguson referred to this phenomenon as the "Aquarian Conspiracy." It is the content, not the fact, of that phenomenon that warrants attention.

Frijof Capra's highly insightful tape on "The New View of the World" points out that the findings of science have disclosed the systems-nature of things and the futility of regarding anything in isolation. He finds this highly compatible with the practices of Eastern Religions, especially those centering on Mysticism. He points out rightly that the Newtonian-Cartesian world-picture of cause and effect is no longer useful, that linear progression has been replaced by episodic and spontaneous movement, that mechanical causation is out and statistical probability is in. The holographic view of reality in which each part contains the whole and each element gains its significance from its relationship to the whole, is now the norm in science. From his perspective, this view needs to inform our thinking and action in other arenas as well.

I. The Process/Existentialism Myth

For many years people have attempted to come to terms with the demolition of the Newtonian-Cartesian synthesis and to articulate the myth appropriate for a time in which its assumptions no longer work. Two of the most creative have been Process Philosophy and Existentialism: there are no longer isolated things, but events-in-time, each related to the other and each exerting an impact on the whole process. Creation is continuing; trends are being shaped by seemingly isolated incidents. Every life is utterly significant because of its unique and unrepeatable contribution to the historical process.

It matters what I do because I am effecting the whole universe and whole course of history. In this view of things, the PARTICULAR is of primary importance. Systems, trends and wholes are ABSTRACTIONS from and shaped by the particular decisions and actions of units. This is true whether speaking of individuals or of societies. The PERSON is a society composed of many organs and cells, each responding with an element of unpredictable freedom so that it is never 100% certain what any single cell will do with its life. The person is somewhat at the mercy of its cells, and though it exerts an influence on them, it is never able fully to control their somewhat random responses to their environment. The SOCIETY is composed of units of people — local communities, each of which functions uniquely to the health or the harm of society as a whole. The collapse of local communities is prelude to social disaster, for no amount of aid or expertise "from the outside" is able to control or to heal the self-dependent life of the community.

Whereas Process Philosophy and Existentialism have much more to say than that, the important thing to notice is their elevation of the PARTICULAR, and their consequent emphasis on freedom of choice, the value of the individual, and human rights. The PARTICULAR is the primary basis of science and society; the WHOLE is an abstraction consisting of numerous units freely acting in similar enough ways to develop trends and parameters that direct and bind the units in mutually-beneficial relationships.

Within this view, the principal value is freedom and self-realisation, and the primary mode of effective action, episodic. The primary evils are TYRANNY in which one particular arbitrarily imposes its will on another, and ROUTINE in which regular patterns of action stifle individual creativity. The anomaly (no world-view is without them) is MOVEMENTS in which sacred individuals freely bind themselves into disciplined groups for common goals. This literally made no sense to those for

NEW VIEW OF REALITY - John Epps

whom the particular was paramount. In this time covenants suffered: families broke up in astounding numbers; social mores were flagrantly violated; revolutions and terrorists aimed directly at social structures; and vocational struggles became justification for a wide variety of experimentation with alternative lifestyles. "Commitment" of one's unique creativity seemed an absurdly wasteful expenditure of a sacred trust. Individualism was the mode.

The effective movements for social change capitalised on the new world view and concentrated on empowering the particular (community), eliciting the free decision (individuals), and creating the change-events (episodes). Local development became the watchword for those concerned with community; self-realisation became the mode of those concerned with people; and catalytic events became the mode of action, whether by the radical right staging group rallies, or the radical left staging protest demonstrations. It was all geared towards allowing the particular to come into its own.

Spirituality in this era was similarly specific, concrete, and particular. The primary aim was to promote AUTHENTICITY as a style of life. And the depths of that style became evident over against the major problem of Death. When the individual/particular is the major value, its obvious temporality occasions a major crisis in faith. So theology and morality went to work describing the depths of living authentically before the fact of one's impending doom. The aim was to disclose the meaning of life in the situation of mortality; the major question was what to do with one's "one time around the clock."

II. The Time of Transition

It is not as though the emphasis on the particular went away. It is more that another emphasis emerged as a result of pushing the particular to its intensification. Just as in poetry, so also in reality: the more particular the descriptions, the more universal their implications. The more science and society probed the particular, the more apparent was its relational character. Historically, the Vietnam War marked the end of individualism, for it dramatised for the world the FACT of relationship. Whether warrior or protestor or observer, all were affected by forces beyond our individual, particular selves; all of us found ourselves in relationships that were unavoidable, however onerous they seemed. RELATIONSHIPS surfaced as the dominant reality and the major focus of concern.

No major philosophical upheaval accompanied this transition. From time to time one heard appeals to the Heisenberg Principle (wherein the experiment is influenced by its observer) or the theory of relativ-

ity or some other application of the "No man is an island..." perspective of Dūnne. But this transition was far more practical than theoretical: people learned the truth of relativity by running into it. Individuals seeking self-realisation found, often in endless therapy sessions, that their "self" was intractably bound with other selves who simply would not go away. Science found its "units" to be bound to other units of relationships of mutual influence. Renewed communities found themselves unavoidably related to cultural, political and economic systems that went far beyond their boundaries. Developers found themselves pushed and pulled into dealing with the regional dynamics. And all of us had to contend with "the organisation".

The simple motif of "Sharing Approaches That Work" may prove to be one of the more powerful themes of this century.

Networks and movements proliferated in this fertile atmosphere. Aware that one is not alone, people linked arms in groupings that ranged from matters of the heart to issues of the pocketbook. People learned the essentially political lesson that individuals exert less influence than groups; the implication seemed to be, therefore, to join or form groups that would make their presence felt. Networks formed, and communication and consensus became issues of concern. The heroic figure in this era was the manager — one who could form consensus and motivate groups and catalyse effective action.

The study of relationships became the focus of attention, particularly in the private sector. Quality Circles undertook to establish what unions earlier had intended — humanised, yet quality working relationships. Volumes appeared on such social graces as body language, winning through intimidation, succeeding in marriage, dressing for success, shaping consensus...the organisation was the primary unit, and one's issues related to both WHICH organisation to "join" and HOW to participate effectively in its functioning. The study of management became a major topic of academia, and institutes of management training abounded throughout the developed world. People were determined to be able to understand and to deal with their relationships creatively.

In this era, the adversary mode of relationships was finally dethroned from its position of dominance. Whereas social relations had relied on a

certain me-against-you style (whether in debates or competition or contests) from the earliest remembered times, now that mode became one among several other possible alternatives.

The perplexity of this era appeared in the political sector, particularly in the developing nations. For here were cultures and peoples, recently made independent, discovering their identity AND their global relationships simultaneously. The identity-participation dilemma took many forms, but consider the Philippines — attempting to retain the identity of a specific culture, and yet having to forge a single nation strong and unified enough to participate in the global economy. Perhaps Marcos' solution to the situation of a nation of 7000 islands, most of which had their own language and military, was not ideal. Certainly not in terms of individual rights. But another value — that of the corporate — had emerged with a whole new set of perplexities.

The relational focus of reality showed up in the spiritual motifs of the time — VOCATION AND RECONCILIATION. One had to do with the person's relation to society, and the other with group's relations with each other. The former was manifest in the phenomenon of "burn out" in which people lost the sense of significance in their work; the relationship of this one singular person to the group task in which it was engaged went awry. People asked, with astounding frequency and power, WHICH organisation or group warranted (and permitted) their participation. The latter came to serious fruition once it became clear that differences were here to stay AND that relationships were unavoidable. The search for modes of being together indestructively came to the fore.

The radical manifestation of reconciliation as a search and as a struggle was the confrontation of global cultures and religions. Once ecumenism was deemed radical when Methodists and Presbyterians could talk together. With the onslaught of a global economy and interdependent polity, people came face to face with cultural plurality. Christians and Moslems and Hindus and Buddhists and Jews and Animists all knew each other as persons and, with some notable retrograde exceptions, tolerated each other with respect. But the trick was to retain one's own culture and let it be transformed, even while appreciating one's neighbor's culture to which one is forever an outsider. It was the issue of reconciliation, and both its interior journey and its eternal manifestations were matters of major concern.

The greatest breakthrough in this era, and one that catapulted us into the new era, was the discovery of the power and promise of INTERCHANGE. It is as though the dynamics of relationships suddenly went transparent when local practitioners began to talk with each other about what works. We who assumed lives were changed and society altered only through violent wrenchings of the self or society were suddenly confronted with the phenomenon of people telling each other what they were doing — and listening to each other — and hearing themselves come off as experts — and finding a new world in the experience of the other — and finding themselves changed. People were empowered by the opportunity to tell their story; and by seeing that their story empowered other people. The simple motif of "Sharing Approaches That Work" may prove to be one of the more powerful themes of the century in its capacity to provide a human alternative to the endless muddling of good-hearted people or to the destructive confrontations of the determined. It made for the creation of a whole that was greater than the sum of its parts. For within the interchange events, something more is created than is apparent; it is as though an underlying unity has been disclosed.

III. The New Myth

The intriguing part of Frijof Capra's analysis is his paralleling of the "new" scientific discoveries with the philosophy of Eastern religions and Mystical

writings. It is interesting because it is a catching juxtaposition of opposites that yields

insights and because it functions to dramatise a point rather than to make one. The value of Eastern religions and Mysticism to Capra's analysis is not that they adequately describe or philosophically account for the new world-picture. Rather, they are examples — perhaps history's best — of instances wherein people took a wholistic perspective.

It is the elevation of the whole system to the position of pre-eminence that marks the shift in the new age.

First it was the particular; then the relationship; now the SYSTEM is the predominant reality.

The new myth has not yet found its philosophical expression. But several events have occurred which insure its credibility. Without seriously questioning the tenants of Existentialism or Process Philosophy, the new myth crept in on historical-event feet, more seriously noted by the journalists

Sometimes history seems to be made by the masses, not in their great deeds, but in their unquestioned assumptions.

than the philosophers, by the bankers than the theologians. Sometimes history seems to be made by the masses, not in their great deeds, but in their unquestioned assumptions.

When the OPEC nations shut off the flow of petroleum in 1974, the extensive reach of the economic system became conscious to the masses. What was heralded in the earthrise photo of 1969 to the intellect became a reality to the pocketbook five years later: the globe is an interrelated, interdependent system, the relationships within which are immensely complex, but in some sense unified. Then the environmental issues surfaced, and humanity's link to the ecosphere surfaced. In medicine, specialisations waned, and increasing attention was devoted to the wholistic view wherein the whole person was treated, not simply a defective part. And one suddenly discovered environmental and psychological and nutritional and chemical and biological factors all swirling in relationships that were indecipherable but determinative to the health of the person.

One simply found oneself part of a whole that exceeded one's capacity to imagine. New dimensions kept cropping up altering one's sense of reality. Future Shock gave way to The Third Wave, and Megatrends and The New Paradigm attempted to chart the course on which we were heading. A useful metaphor was the hologram — the phenomenon in which light directed onto sensitised film can produce a three-dimensional image of an object not present. "The part contains the whole" became a watchword. One is no longer an isolated individual — nor even a related individual; one is part of a system. Many systems, really; but it is not the particulars that concern us now; the systems-nature of things became the operating assumption.

The greatest fear was to be cut off from the system. A cartoon of the clock which was taken apart and put back together and operated perfectly with half the parts left out — that cartoon expressed our fears. Being part of the system meant having a vehicle through which to address one's concerns and pictures of systems abounded. Religious fundamentalism with its closed cosmic system flourished; eastern mystic systems with their poetic and enigmatic portrayals of the unified cosmos gained prominence even in some scientific circles. Meditation gained respect for its purported capacity to bring one into consciousness of unity with the cosmos.

The whole system has become the dominant concern of our era, and this, more than any scientific findings, is the new view of reality.

The spirituality of this era has also shifted. Morality and ethics have taken on a prominence. The way one performs within a system is of conse-

quence, not simply to one's own reputation; it also affects the whole. So the question of abortion becomes linked to global overpopulation; the question of pollution becomes linked to ecological survival; the question of war to that of nuclear annihilation; the question of drugs to that of third world economics. And then the spectre of starvation on a massive scale in Africa, despite the technology and prosperity and good will threw the world into a subtle systems-crisis.

People have come to care so deeply and perceive so urgently that we take stands. We declare our integrity. We do not deny other valid, even urgent, claims on us, but we declare where we stand. It is as if the weight of the world's issues is so pressing that one cannot wait to sort through the complexity that surrounds each life. One finds the system most compatible, and one jumps in. And herein lies the danger of fanaticism: ignoring the other valid and pressing concerns that are not part of the particular system in which I am involved. Paradoxically, the perception of the whole and my relationships within it forces me to focus my attention on the particular cause worth my life. But the integrity that is valid today is one which acknowledges not simply my system, but the whole system in which mine is but a particular part. Significance comes in being part of an integrated system that is effectively addressing global issues. But even my system is subordinate to the whole.

On the other hand, there is present the temptation to resist declaration and to soar above the system in search of its perfect integration. Instead of inclusive integrity, some go for absolute unity. Instead of relying on temporal models, they search for the ideal solution. The mystic withdrawal into inner reality and insight can become a trap preventing effective engagement. In the longing for a structure and story for seeing one's life linked to major social issues, some declare where they stand and find a company of colleagues. Others go into themselves and find an inner reality, Zen and motorcycles, inner tennis or golf or management. Recognition and acknowledgement and submission to the Whole is part of the new integrity; but so also is immersion and action and responsibility in the particular system I have chosen. Even in the new view of reality, human integrity is a tensional process, not a static goal.

Commitment to active engagement in the world's major issues on behalf of the whole earth and the whole future is the integrity being called for today. Ours is the unique opportunity to embody it in our total thinking and action and presence. Of such is history shaped.

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