

# DuVersity Newsletter No 30



**Lord Thurlow celebrating his 100th birthday at The Travellers Club, London, March 9th**

Lord Thurlow was one of our original patrons and when he was younger (!) often came to Baltimore to attend our seminar-dialogues as, in earlier years still, he was a student at Bennett's International Academy in Gloucestershire. We made a few video-conversations with him about his extraordinary life as a diplomat, though he was reticent to speak much about his role in foreign affairs. 50 friends and 50 family gathered at the Travellers Club in London to pay him tribute and we would like to do the same.

Our emphasis in this issue of the DuVersity Newsletter is towards Systematics and the Enneagram but includes articles relating to the Feldenkrais method. Breaking with tradition we also include a story by Gregory Dominato. Next issue I hope to give a report on a meeting in Germany to further the knowledge and practice of Gurdjieff's 39 series of Movements and also on Systematics Gathering XIII. Gurdjieff's Movements and Bennett's Systematics are both examples of what I call the 'Gymnasium' of human life, which I speak about at length in my book *Gymnasium of Beliefs in Higher Intelligence*. The term 'gymnasium' is intended to resonate with the older terminology of 'the work'. Both terms imply we have to get up a sweat!

# Refining Systematics

**John Godolphin Bennett, Glen House, January 25, 1970** reprinted from *UniS: The Journal for Discovering Universal Qualities*, Vol. 2, #1, Fall 1988 and edited by John Dale

Will you bear with me if I try to clear up some points that came up during the morning lecture and also in some of the conversations that we had since then on **The Systematics of Organization?**

What are we fundamentally concerned with in Systematics? There is cognition, knowing, observing, measuring, collecting, and generalizing, and the rest of it. If they are looked at as a cognitive mode, we see that they are always accompanied to some extent by judgment. That is to say, in practice we never have absolutely pure cognitions and no judgment. Even if I simply become aware that there is a glass on this table, there is already something or other from my previous experience of glasses and articles of furniture that interprets my sense experience, so that what seems a perfectly simple cognition of the presence of a glass on the table has something in it that is also an act of judgment that "This is a glass on the table." Therefore, one cannot actually divide one's investigation processes into two quite separate, mutually closed categories of cognitions and judgments. When one tries to do that, one goes back to some of the mistakes, for example, that were made in Kant's distinction between pure reason and judgment, and which people have been trying for two hundred years to rectify.

Although there is always an element of judgment in every cognitive act, and an element of cognition in every judgment, it is quite clear that the balance between the two varies enormously. There are some cases where the cognitive element is really so secondary that the judgment is in fact the all-important thing, and in others, the reverse.

In any application of Systematics to practical problems, there will have to be cognitions, there will have to be observations, measurements, and the rest of it, but my claim is that Systematics is essentially a technique of judgment and not a technique of cognition. It is at every stage a matter of decision. Judgment and decision-making are hardly separable for this purpose.

## **Setting Up the Monad**

When we are setting up the monad, this is not even primarily a cognitive act. It is not like knowing what the organization is, walking round its boundaries, and simply saying, "This wall separates the organization from the non-organization." It is nothing like this. It is making decisions or acts of judgment of just how far this organization is totally involved and where we can say that the rest is external to it.

This is far more an act of judgment than it is an act of cognition. So that even when we start deciding on the problem that we take as a wholeness of investigation, we are going to delimit. It will be an act of judgment as to just what we are going to include and what we are going to exclude. When we have made this decision, the relatively simple part is to enumerate what is going to be contained within this wholeness. This is an extremely good example of the dominating part that judgment plays as against cognition, simply in selecting this wholeness. Are we going to look at this wholeness just in terms of the organization with which we are immediately associated, or are we going to look at it in a

wider context? If so, where is the boundary going to be drawn? How far are the social and market connections of the organization going to be taken into it?

Also, there is a decision that involves cognition, involves knowing about the field. You may have to know a great deal about an industrial complex before you can decide just what you are going to take into your field of study. But when you have got this knowledge, you've still got three steps to make: that is, not only in determining your boundaries but also how far in detail you have to go, and not only how things stand now but how they will stand at various stages of maturity. You are going to have to take judgment decisions, and one part of the discipline of Systematics is that it requires that these decisions should be taken. If you have grasped the significance of a monad, you understand that this property of wholeness is not nearly so obvious and simple.

You have to have a certain appreciation of scale and magnitude and make judgments in terms of this, of what is relevant and what is not relevant. There is always a tendency to [specify the monad] without having gone through the actual discipline of asking questions like: "Where are we going to draw the external boundaries? How deep are we going to penetrate? How far are we going to take into account social, governmental, and other factors that are out of our control and that are yet intimately concerned with our undertaking? What is the actual time-span within which our study is going to be relevant?"

### **Dyads and Polarities**

All these things have to be done, and every one of them is primarily an act of judgment. When you have done that, you are then faced with the fact that there are probably twenty or thirty relevant and interesting ways in which an organization is polarized. There are all sorts of polarizations. You have to decide which polarizations are relevant to your wholeness, how far the stratification that this introduces is to be taken into account, and how you are going to deal with this property, this kind of field, as a result of interference between different polarities. You do not have a simple linear hierarchy but always a kind of unique spread.

This interaction between the polarities in an organization, and deciding just which you will take into account and which you won't, what is really relevant for seeing the "force fields" in this organization, is again primarily an act of judgment. It is far more an act of judgment than one of cognition. And it is the kind of thing that is not often done unless something hits you between the eyes. You see that you are up against a direct problem of the delegation of responsibility, and decentralization, or something of this sort. Therefore, you say, we have clearly got to take this polar field of responsibility into account, and you think that you have really come to grips with the problems. But, how do you know that this field, this polarity that you think is so important, is not actually dominated by another one, for example, by some kind of instrumental dyad such as the kind of action to be taken by human beings and the kind of action that can be delegated to automatic processes? This instrumental polarity may have such an influence on the responsibility polarity that you must take it into account in studying the other. But it also may not. To say whether you are going to take it into account or not is not an act of cognition but an act of judgment.

### **The Triads and Strategies**

I think it will be obvious without saying any more that when you come to recognizing the strategy situation in an organization, it is so elusive that this is not something that you will "know," that you will be

able to say about it, "This is simply an ascertainable, observable fact." You have to do something more than that. You have to weigh the behaviour of different people, and different groups of people, who are influencing the operations of this organization, and see from that what kind of strategic picture is emerging. You are going to make use of a lot of observational material. You have to talk to a number of people. You will have to check one set of views against another. This checking of one set of views is useless unless you make a judgment about it. Furthermore, the real judgment is the act by which you draw out of a whole lot of subjective impressions something objective, that is, the actual operational strategy present in this organization.

When I have tried to do this in specific cases, I have seen for myself how it calls for something in one, a kind of suspense of judgment, until one really sees that *that is what is really happening here*. They think something else is happening, but what is really happening is that the initiative is really *there*, and not where they thought it was. They are dominated by this, and not by that.

The way I have described it, it looks as if it is a cognition. In fact, it is not. It is a peculiar thing here. It is not an act of judgment in the sense that you make a decision that "I will include this and exclude that." It is more subtle when you have gotten to the triad. It is that the balance of factors, taking each one in turn upon the others, makes it certain that this is really what is happening here. After I have done that, I could begin to verify that if that is so, then this sort of trend will be emerging in this organization. It will be doing this kind of thing, and if I find that it is, then I have confirmed my judgment. That is not the same thing as saying that I have verified a fact.

### **The Tetrad**

When we talk about the tetrad, we have to emphasize that there is a complete pitfall here for anyone who tries to treat it as if there are simply four boxes, each of which contains a set of data, for example, an inventory of resources, a schedule of tasks, an evaluation of the current position, and a formulation of goals. If you do that, you may or may not be doing something useful, but you are not doing Systematics, because Systematics requires that there be an act of judgment that will decide for you, for example, whether the ostensible goals that they are talking about are the goals that they really do set for themselves.

You can tell about the goals, the goals that are really motivational in this organization, by seeing how they link with the other factors. If the goals do not link with and influence intimately and profoundly each of the other three factors, then they are just "talk" goals. They are not real goals. They are not concrete. At the same time, in each case, this kind of judgment that is required for this tetrad analysis of an organization is so difficult that if you could see how difficult it was, I think you would throw the whole thing out of the window and say I won't have anything more to do with it.

You will find that this is extraordinarily hard, to be able really to pass judgment on four sets of terms, each of which is quite different in nature, not merely the sort of difference that you have between raw materials, equipment, and marketable products, or between research, production, sales, and financial personnel. It is very different from that.

You are comparing a state of affairs that is actual with a state of affairs that is possible, with a state of affairs that is potential, and with a state of affairs that is in action. The goals are not potential; they are merely something that is possible. Your resources contain potentialities. Your tasks are

something in action, having a time element inseparable from them. These four things are different in nature. It is terribly hard for the human mind actually to think about four things as different as that.

If you think about goals, for example, as if they were something potentially inherent in the organization, then you begin to find that you have to keep chopping and changing, that you have to keep adjusting your goals. In reality, it is not like that, because the goals, if properly conceived, should express what is *possible* for this organization. Out of what is theoretically *possible*, only some things will become *potential*, pregnant, and actually able to come about, and other things less so.

But I emphasize goals as this awareness of *possibility*, of what the situation can give. Given all sorts of completely unpredictable factors, this is the kind of thing that, properly speaking, constitutes a goal. You cannot say that a goal in this kind of sense—and I think this is the right sense in which the word “goal” should be used and therefore distinguished from the word “objective”—is a predetermined state of affairs that you are endeavouring to reach. A goal is a *possibility* that you are feeling out. But this possibility is absolutely essential. There must be a feeling of something to be realized, and this feeling must not be made too naively specific; otherwise, you have lost it as a goal factor and have turned it into simply a statement of objectives, and the statement of objectives is merely the connection between the goals and the tasks.

I feel that I have to warn you that when I come to try to apply the tetrad in concrete situations, I always give in and make it too much of just taking things as they are, of accepting formulae instead of reality.

## **Reality**

This word “reality” is the word that I want to finish on in this lecture. Systematics is a search for the reality of the situation. The reality of the situation is not the facts. The facts can be converted into every sort of lie. You can interpret facts in any way that suits you according to other principles of interpretation, and, of course, the very same sheet of paper is black or white. There are various degrees of interpretation of facts that get away from this degree of subjectivity, but the search for it is, “What is the situation, *really*? What is *really* happening here? What does it portend for what we bring out of it, if we only set about it in the right way?”

When I talk about a “state of affairs,” for example, this is not just *what is there* but an *appreciation* of what is there. By that, I mean the *real* state of affairs, or the truth about it all. This linguistically sounds as if I were talking all the time about cognition, as if the truth is something that we know and perceive and that reality is something “knowable.” The peculiar thing about it is that it is not so. The *reality* of the situation is something we *commit ourselves to* through acts of decision and judgment. There is a certain acceptance involved in this, and even the outside investigator who comes to look at the situation has got to make this kind of act of commitment. When he is evaluating the situation, at a certain point he has got to say to himself, “This is what I am going to take as the reality from which I am going to work.” When he does that, he is making his act of judgment.

It is not that Systematics makes you think, which is very fine, but thinking is a very superficial process. What is required is *to decide* and *to judge*. This is the deep and committal thing, and unless at every stage you recognize that you have made a decision, you can take it that you have not

applied Systematics techniques to it. When you recognize that you have made a decision, then you will see that something has coalesced, something has happened.

## **Bennettian Systematics: An Aid for Bahá'ís in Moving toward Global Engagement**

**John Dale, [jtd359@yahoo.com](mailto:jtd359@yahoo.com), 2012-03-08**

### **An Introduction**

After a period of focusing on the building of social and institutional infrastructure, the Bahá'í Universal House of Justice has recently directed us toward greater engagement with the systems of action and discourse in the world around us. It would help to have some tools with which to do this. To provide some tools is what I hope to accomplish in this publication.

In general, systems are diversities within some kind, or degree, of mutuality. Systems can be abstract, such as logic, involving formal conventions and generic information, or they can be concrete, such as you and me, involving matter, energy, and specific information. Concrete systems can be static or dynamic, living or non-living, human or non-human, harmonious with one another or conflictive, sustainable or unsustainable, and so on.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, everything has become a system. We see the entire cosmos, including the Earth and ourselves upon it, as a system of both order and chaos, of both opportunities for life and of hazards that imperil life. And on this Earth—whose very geology and atmosphere our out-of-control population numbers and negative “footprints” have altered and upset—we humans and our own conflictive systems pose the greatest immediate hazard. Because of our imbalance with nature and our injustice amongst ourselves, the Earth/human and human/human systems are now coming to a climax of strain and crisis.

Computer models of the world system since their beginnings in the 1970s have consistently predicted major systems breakdowns in the first third of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. That's right now, and, globally, we are still hurtling right toward the long-predicted result.

Wisdom typically implies caution and prudence—the Precautionary Principle. Yet, given the urgency of our global situation, the most prudent thing to do is, as the House of Justice is urging us, to throw ourselves heart and soul into thoughtful engagement with the situation. In doing this, however, we Bahá'ís can no longer hide or suppress our own true radiant nature. All beings are spiritually radiant to varying degrees. We Bahá'ís are, or should be, consciously radiant, and to the greatest degree. We are the community of Christ Returned in the Glory (“Radiance”) of the Father. Our given mission is to shine upon this Earth the light of global self-government guided by God to establish the Most Great Peace. As such, the responsible actions that we will undertake as world public citizens and spiritual “physicians-in-training” over the next few years to help cure the disease of human animosity will have effects on world wellness not just during the remainder of the 21<sup>st</sup> century but literally into the “deep future.” Every moment is precious. At stake is the survival

of a favorable biosphere and of a civilization of ever-advancing human dignity. We must act urgently, we must act wisely, and therefore we must act systematically.

Indeed, what the world chiefly needs is a new pattern and method of self-government—an overall, systematic method of integrative, dignifying, non-adversarial, non-politicizing, and economically equitable self-government such as outlined in the Bahá'í writings, such as Bahá'ís are committed to by covenant, and such as the Bahá'í institutions and current Bahá'í world community of roughly 5,000,000 souls are already using and developing. What is needed is to articulate better and more widely this system of self-government so that others can see what it is and what kind of spirit animates it. Systems science in general, and what I call Bennettian Systematics, in particular, can be of assistance.

What is Bennettian Systematics?

The terms **Systematics**, **Systemics**, **General Systems Theory**, and **Systemology** are basically synonymous and refer to the general study or science of systems. **Living Systems Theory**, **Cybernetics**, **Game Theory**, **Information Theory**, **Complexity Theory**, and **Bennettian Systematics** are branches of systems science that study certain types of systems or that study systems from certain perspectives.

**Bennettian Systematics**, which is often loosely referred to within the discipline simply as “Systematics” or as “Multi-Term Systems,” is a general method of engaging with wholes and their subsystems in progressive stages of depth in order to illumine their structure and qualities and also our own structure and qualities as we ourselves are participants in the systems that we study. In Bennettian Systematics, we ourselves are always reflectively a part of the whole. Using Bennettian Systematics, we can therefore move ourselves more mindfully, with continual remembrance of our true identity and mission, toward the deeper, more holistic engagement with society and its discourses that the Universal House of Justice has directed the Bahá'í community to achieve.

Later in this Introduction, we will learn a tiny bit more about the progressive stages of Bennettian systems analysis, and later chapters will, of course, go into greater detail.

The whole point of Bahá'ís in using Bennettian Systematics is (or should be), however, the accelerated achievement of wisdom, balance, and justice in line with the urgency of our global situation.

If we define wisdom as the practical understanding of a situation as to its facts, its values, its harmony with other facts and values, and, in light of these, of what to do about the situation and how to go about it, we see two things. First, we see, with humility, that wisdom, even with group cooperation, is ongoing and never final; it necessitates a process of continual self-correction. Second, however, we see that, in cooperation and synergy with one another, *we can indeed become self-correcting*, and that, clearly, the better our grasp of a situation, the more wisdom, justice, and harmony we can bring to bear upon it. As Bahá'ís, we are told, for example, “A kindly tongue is the lodestone of the hearts of men. It is the bread of the spirit, it clotheth the words with meaning, it is the fountain of the light of wisdom and understanding.” We are also told, “The most beloved of all things in My sight is Justice.” We must, therefore, “speak justice with kindness.” We care systematically about our own personal development as wise and just individuals who work, as well,

within just institutions to produce morally, economically, ecologically, and socially balanced communities. As Bahá'ís, we can use Bennettian Systematics, and other systems sciences, either privately or in groups, to enhance our thinking or consulting about issues and to help achieve “new minds” and elevated results in relation to global-local projects of service and engagement.

### **Historical development of Bennettian Systematics**

Bennettian Systematics began to develop as a discipline after World War II in England. It arose by virtue of the work of a number of people centered around the Institute for the Comparative Study of History, Philosophy and the Sciences. Primary among them was the English seeker and thinker John Godolphin Bennett (1897-1974), the founder of the Institute and from whose name I derive the term “Bennettian Systematics.” The same fruitful period saw the origination elsewhere of other systems disciplines by people such as John von Neumann (game theory), Ludwig von Bertalanffy (general systems), Claude Shannon (information theory), Norbert Wiener (cybernetics), James Grier Miller (Living Systems), Ervin Lazlo (systems evolution), and many others.

Bennett was a multi-faceted and talented person with deep interests and experience in both Christian and non-Christian theology and forms of inner effort. At the same time, he had a profound interest in space-time physics and in trying to create a unifying picture of physics and spirituality. If one compares his four-volume magnum opus, *The Dramatic Universe*, published 1956-66, with the work and vision of the Catholic scientist Teilhard de Chardin, one can see the benefits of Bennett's collaboration with a whole team of experts. This team not only critiqued early drafts of *The Dramatic Universe* but also, from 1963 to 1974, produced and published the journal *Systematics* and developed the discipline beyond what appeared in the *DU*. As a result, *The Dramatic Universe* and later publications put forward a nuanced early “theory of everything” of both profound technical and mathematical depth and but also of profound spiritual depth and a much more universal anthropological, theological, and historical breadth than anything previously produced. In Volume 4, the last volume of *The Dramatic Universe*, for example, Bennett deals with the overall sweep of the last 30,000 years of human history and with what he sees as the periodic incursion and operation within that history of conscious guiding intelligence—what we Bahá'ís call progressive revelation. He speaks of humanity as now entering—potentially—what he calls the Synergic Epoch, which he dates from the 1840s and which he elaborates in connection with a favorable mention of the Bahá'í Faith. One of his deepest concerns in the transition to the Synergic Epoch was the problem of increasing complexity in the world as the various dissonant systems of the past encountered one another in the process of globalization. Too much complexity and dissonance makes people retreat back into their previous identities. With the right tools and attitudes, however, we can, instead, move ahead toward the goal of sustainable global community.

### **General methodology**

Bennettian Systematics “tames” complexity (to some extent) by using systems of simple, finite, but increasing complexity and information-holding capacity to help us better map, understand, and navigate the complexity and inter-relatedness of the real world.



Our own nervous systems work in the same way to progressively sense, discriminate, perceive, conceive, understand, and creatively react to our environment. Because of the informational narrowness and conflict-ridden nature of our past origins, however, our nervous systems are still programmed for distrust of diversity, thereby perpetuating narrowness, conflict, and imbalance. To create more truly Bahá'í ("radiant") minds, as Universal House of Justice member Paul Lample calls for in *Creating a New Mind: Reflections on the Individual, the Institutions, and the Community*, we need a neural self-re-education. Bennettian systems can help us restore to ourselves the benefits and richness of balanced experience. They are tools not just of "mindfulness" but of creativity, unanimity, and of walking humbly in the field of transcendence.

The process of Bennettian systems analysis typically begins with the notion of Function, Being, and Will as elements in every human experience and with noticing or identifying some whole situation or problem with which we need to engage ourselves. This is called identifying the "monad" or system of concern as a whole. Analysis progresses into discriminating within this monad the structural subsystems and qualities such as polarities (dyads), dynamic relationships (triads), directed activities (tetrads), potentialities and significances (pentads), coordinative events (hexads), stages of development (heptads), and so on. Often, geometric symbols aid in the visualization of each system's progressively richer interconnections. In the Bahá'í teachings, we learn that revelation bases itself on reality's inherent interconnections. So too, systems science in general and Bennettian Systematics in particular strive to help us approach reality through progressively more informed experience and effective action, always keeping ourselves humbly in sight within the Whole. Using Bennettian systems, we can better understand, and sympathize, dialogue, and synergize with, the visions and discourses of others. With better understanding comes greater solidarity. With solidarity come solutions to global-local problems and a whole system of social interaction and self-government based on synergy and complementarity rather than stalemate and adversariality.

Bennett and his students, including very notably Anthony G. E. Blake (1939 - ), have carried Bennettian systems analysis up to what is called within the discipline a "twelve-term system," that is, a system in which twelve qualitatively different but interrelated points of interest or "terms" are held together in a single conceptual embrace. For the most part, however, the first six Bennettian systems, in connection often with the ninth, will do most of the "heavy lifting." Very recently, Anthony Blake has found a way to visualize the systems together into what he calls "the Lattice of Understanding" and a "language of Will." To me, this is very exciting, for both spiritual and philosophical reasons, and Bennettian Systematics, still a kind of "niche" systems discipline and unfamiliar to most systems theorists, is at a new stage of development, deepening, and expansion. As a systems discipline, Bennettian Systematics needs the feedback that users concerned with the future, such as Bahá'ís, can contribute.

In subsequent chapters, I shall introduce specific details and applications of Bennettian systems. Let me end this brief introduction here, however, with a list of resources whereby you can begin your own journey and, also, finally, with a quote from a talk of Mr. Bennett given in 1972 in which he was linking work with Systematics to the positive transformation of negative attitudes.

## Introductory Resources for Bennettian Systematics

1. The website <http://www.systematics.org>, a source of seminal articles from the journal *Systematics* and of much other valuable material relating to background and applications.
2. The website <http://www.duversity.org>, source of additional materials by Anthony Blake and others.
3. The website <http://www.anthonyblake.co.uk>, source of additional writings of Anthony Blake.
4. The website <http://addons.byair.net/systematics/>, which provides a compendium of historical sources of, or similarities to, Bennettian Systems.
5. The website <http://www.bennettbooks.org>, source of many of Bennett's published works, including *Elementary Systematics*, and Saul Kuchinsky's *Systematics: Search for Miraculous Management*.
6. The website <http://www.jgbennett.net>, maintained by Bennett's two sons, Ben and George, and connected to an intentional community in Massachusetts, a source of downloadable articles and a complete bibliography of Bennett's works.
7. The website of Richard Heath, [www.matrixofcreation.co.uk](http://www.matrixofcreation.co.uk), developing Systematics in new directions, including the Lattice of Understanding.
8. The website of Richard N. Knowles' Center for Self-Organizing Leadership, [www.centerforselforganizingleadership.org](http://www.centerforselforganizingleadership.org).
9. The discussion group Deeper Dialogue, located at [http://groups.yahoo.com/group/deeper\\_d](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/deeper_d), focusing on Systematics as a discipline, on announcements of seminars and conferences.
10. The discussion group Harmonious Developments, designed to inter-acquaint people in the Systematics and integrative disciplines with people in the Bahá'í community, located at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/HarmoniousDevelopments>.
11. The discussion group Build Earth Community, <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Build-Earth-Community>, intended to inter-acquaint people in the Systematics and Bahá'í communities with people concerned with international relations and global self-government theory.

**A Quote from John Bennett** - London Group Meeting #2, Kensington Library, November, 1972.

“To replace all negative attitudes toward the existing world by a feeling of confidence and love toward the new world which is being born, towards the still unborn child that is the future of mankind . . . To arouse in oneself constantly this love of the future of humanity . . . Every time one observes in oneself some kind of negative attitude, to take this as a reminder that we human beings live on this earth in order to serve, particularly to serve the future . . . And to serve with love, with hope, with confidence that it is possible for mankind to be born again . . . : Such a positive attitude should enter our behavior, into our speech.

But for this to have some force, we have to deprive something else. That is, we acknowledge that *one can really work against negativity*, to take away energies which currently flow into negative thought, postures, and feelings, and to form them toward the other.

This is a very hard thing that I am proposing to you, because, in all of us, negative habits are so ingrained.

In the very midst of feeling compassion, one finds oneself finding fault, judging.

This is a disease that has overcome mankind, and we are all infected by it.

Some very lucky people have escaped this disease; they have some lucky immunity from it.

It is very fortunate to know such people. It is an extraordinary thing to see such rare and healthy souls in the midst of so much that is diseased and distorted.

Very few even of those people have this true, robust love toward their enemies, but some have, and all of us can have more of this.

It is a technical matter. It is not a matter of thinking, "It would be nice to be like that." It is a matter of *knowing how to bring oneself to that place where our attitudes are under our own control*, where it is possible for us to say THIS and not THAT."

## THE BIG WHEEL

a story by Gregory Dominato



He has the marks of a traveller: a long gaze, a twitch like he might need to get out of the way of something, a stained, greasy swollenness under his eyes. He does not know where he is right now. Sometimes this happens, and when it does there is a secret delight that plays about the vesicles of his middle back. He can live off this delight when it comes, sipping it lightly for some time.

He's ventured into new territory and it brings him to a sand beach. There is a wide glade of tall grass running headlong down the cardioid field of his vision. Breakers sound and turn in their echo. Gulls cry. There is a woman sitting on a dune looking out to the ocean not very far from him. She's looking through him, but

he's sure that she is aware of his presence.

Walking toward her, but keeping his distance, he calls out, "Are you from around here?"

Without any change in her position she says, "No, are you?"

"Well, no," shouting over the surf. "I'm not even sure how I got here. I have a map but apparently things have changed since it was made. My name is A'naf."

She motions him closer. When he's come to within a conversation's length, he stops to take her in. She is a slight woman in a caftan hoodie sitting on her haunches, hands on her thighs, sandals neatly arranged. He can see her mouth and angular jaw coming out from of the shade of the hood in the strong afternoon sun.

She says, "There's no slow way of telling you this A'naf, so I'll just say it. I am your death."

“Hm.” His eyes hunker down into his sockets. “Really?” He scans for weapons and other signs of malice.

She hasn’t moved other than to move her lips. “You might say I am that part of you that can see the ocean.”

“Sounds appropriate, even poetic,” he offers.

“I’m not here to take you away or anything.” She lingers. “Anyway it’s not like I take you anywhere really. You simply become me,” pausing. “Or I simply become you. It’s hard to tell, as there’ll be nobody left to do the telling. At any rate, it’s not time.” A’naf makes a deep throaty sound, and she asks, “Do you see that ship out there?”

He does not turn.

“Well anyway it’s been looking ominous there for some time.” She then says, “I didn’t think that you were going to get here.”

“I didn’t think that you were here to be gotten to,” he says scrying her more closely.

“I look beautiful now, no?” Pulling back her hoodie, she turns to look at him. It’s not so much a look as a glance. She smiles quickly and turns back to the ocean. Her Asian-black hair blows up behind her, and with a quick graceful gesture she ties it all in a knot on the top of her head. Her features are wide and cut with fineness. Her lips are peaked with the slope of a French curve, her cheeks the gentle rise of the Mongolian steppe.

“It’s a big moment for me too actually,” she says. “I’m told most do not meet their death until much later.” She raises her eyebrows. “Some advice? When it comes time for the ocean, to actually get in, when it comes time for us as I was saying, just take your clothes off and get right in,” she says.

“What’s that supposed to mean?” asks A’naf, sensing, perhaps, a come-on vibe.

“Are you ready for that?” she answers.

“Who are you?”

“I am your death. I told you that already.”

A’naf sees that the woman is no immediate danger to him, and he is, indeed, somehow attracted to her. At any rate, he wants to hear what she has to say. He realizes that such things do happen, that such conversations are written in the book of the possible. The veil has been lifted more than a few times on the lines of that book. He has peered into the sucking emptiness of it. He wants this situation. He is, after all, a traveller.

“Okay, I accept you for what you’re saying.” He narrows his gaze. “I’ve cooked enough in this sun today. I’ve been cooked enough to play the cards as they come.” He pauses to hear his words. “What shall I call you?”

“You needn’t call me anything.”

He wants to come at the question again from a different angle, but rolls his lips instead.

Her tone changes, “The middle is disappearing. The middle is always disappearing, of course, but people often don’t see that. We’re on a peninsula here, an isthmus between two oceans. Soon it will be one ocean. They’ll come to meet. The land is shrinking.”

“I’d like to say that’s helpful. Where’s the other ocean? In my mind?” A’naf asks with some bluff.

“Come and sit, A’naf. Really that was very kind of you earlier, giving me my distance, letting me know that you were not a threat. Anyway, come and sit.”

When A’naf is sitting beside her, he sees that there is no ship and says, “No ship.”

She responds with, “No ship. Just checking for stray curiosity.”

In some places and times A’naf might be sitting trying to figure this whole situation out, this situation of him sitting with his death just now. Yet, he is looking out to the ocean and simply taking in the curious strange sensation of sitting with his death. He knows it may well be a fiction. After all, where are the facts? She’s a woman on a beach talking mysteriously, and he’s the kind of sucker that falls for such things. She might be an escapee from a local institution. For that matter, he might be an escapee from a local institution. Nevertheless, as near as he can tell, she is playing all of the cards.

They sit for a long moment in the gaze of the ocean. He begins to feel a pain, not a body pain, but a feeling pain. His mind flashes to moments of bald stupidity: things he said that he needn’t have, moments of being caught out beside himself, the stupidity of private fixations and lies told and untold. All of this balls up in his gut, his collected stupidity. The failure to see and be in the same moment curses him. It bursts up like something he may well puke out. He finds his breathing and swallows a salty mouthful of air.

“Hmm,” she offers philosophically, “don’t you find that we so often take responsibility for things that are not really ours? We find it so hard to see without getting caught up in the seeing. The wise person is wise enough to see that he’s riding a donkey, although many times the donkey is smart enough to see that it is riding him.”

He grits his teeth. “You said earlier that you are my death,” he manages.

“Yes.”

“So you’re not death in general,” he wonders.

“All of a sudden you’re sitting with me, and really starting to have a good conversation, and you’re wondering whether that’s enough?”

“Yes, I am.”

“Better now than never,” she smiles. She looks at A’naf a long while. “This is all well and good, but I need to tell you that soon you may find yourself somewhere else, starrng at the shadows on another ceiling,” she gestures to the sky. “You may find yourself in a beautiful house, with a beautiful wife, and you may ask yourself — well...how did I get here?” She pauses. “Letting the days go by. Let the water hold me down.” Gesturing to the ocean. “Letting the days go by. Water flowing underground, into the blue again, after the money’s gone, once in a lifetime, water flowing underground.”

Laughing, A'naf says "My death knows Talking Heads. That's perfect."

She turns to him and with a candid purse of her lips says, "Why not? I know everything that you know," she pauses to catch his eye, "plus I know much that you don't know." She laughs now too, and says, "But really A'naf, I'm not here to mess with you."

A'naf is getting that puking sensation again. Though he cannot quite picture it, nevertheless he feels the truth of who she is.

She continues, "The ocean is here. All of the underground water is flowing here," she points with her chin. Her voice catches when she says this. A'naf gets a sharp pain in his side. She says, "This is a peninsula, an isthmus. The ocean is coming in from both sides. The land is shrinking."

The wind blows a strand of her hair over her face. "Say listen, there's a beautiful walk over the dunes there. She motions over her right shoulder. It might be just the thing for you. I have to say, you're looking a little pukey."

He catches her eye. She is my death. Instinctively he kisses her hand. It is cold. A shiver falls into his depths.

"Now you know," she says.

They part. He walks up and over and through the tufts of grass pawing at his clothes. There is a line of trees not far, and he finds a way through to them. The sound of the ocean fades. There are songbirds singing. They sing so high that they clear a path directly into the coolness of the upper octaves of the atmosphere. The lightness in his head congeals into a slow pulse, like a hand clenching and relaxing, clenching and relaxing. He can sense animals in the brush. There is nothing to stop him, and so he moves on. He finds a path and walks for a long while through the trees.

Suddenly, there is a buffeting of the air, a quick pulse of pressure, then the distant sound of waves flows into the sphere of his awareness. There is the musk of salt water. The path carries him along.

Coming out from the woods, he is back among dunes and grass. Climbing to the top of a nearby dune, he looks out over a large body of water breaking in pulses on the beach. Has he walked in a circle?

It is an isthmus between two oceans.

It is late afternoon now. Not far down the beach the inky structures of a seaside amusement park rise out of the mist, obscure and rare, like the fleeting evidence of life on other planets. As if on cue, the lights on the big Ferris wheel come up. In his mind's eye there is a greasy carnie with a sideways grin, hand on the stick, ratcheting it up. The idea of seeing people at the amusement park amuses him, here in this place where he sat with his death not long ago as a beautiful woman by his side. He picks up his pace.

Coming into a small cluster of houses he sees they are well kept. It is old suburbia, a dream of the future etched in yards and murmurs. People sit out on the front steps in the early evening keeping company with the twilight. A woman in blue jeans calls out to him and waves. People know him here, and he feels like a returning hero. There is the smell of dinner cooking, corn on the boil.

He cannot stop to eat. His feet are carrying him somewhere, and he simply cannot stop. He's a train passing through with a dopler-note of longing. He leaves the cluster of houses walking toward the entrance to the park. The big wheel rises out of a jumble of signs, turning like someone stopping to think mid-sentence.

He walks into a parking lot. There is one car, in the corner. It looks like it has been bombed out. He's not sure. Something is wrong. He runs in panic through long shadows. The doors have been blown off. The paint is charred. The windows are cracked and sagging. A moment of recognition. It is his car. What is my car doing here? The computer in the trunk is nothing but a blackened shell. All of his data is gone. His data is gone. He does not remember leaving it here.

Suddenly it is as if he is lost in the middle of the ocean with no land in sight. There is no one but himself and the unfathomable depths beneath him. There is no one but himself, and he is shrinking.

He narrows his eyes to the charred bits and then widens them to the gaping mouth where the trunk once was. Why this? Why this? Where will he go? What can he do? It's more than the car. Much more. The grief of it cuts his legs out from under him. He falls to the pavement in a shudder.

After a long while of trying to remember, of trying to remember himself in bits and pieces, he hears the birdsong again like a prayer. He follows the overtones up into the blue again. Slowly getting to his feet, he walks toward the carnival gate.

There are a few carnie people around. No one notices him overly. Setting up or tearing down, he cannot tell. A man behind a coin-toss game sits with a guitar playing the blues. A young woman in a velveteen bodice looks like she must be on her way to the beer garden. An enormous man in a Nehru jacket and goatee beard stamps vouchers. And there he is, the greasy carnie at the base of the big wheel. He is brilliantly tattooed in the Irezumi style. Gesturing with a quick chin, the carnie wants a ticket. A'naf has no ticket. Reaching into his pocket nevertheless, he finds a playing card. It is the three of hearts. The carnie nods as he takes it. A'naf is the only rider. He asks the carnie his name. It is Stewart. The Ferris-wheel man is named Stewart.

He reaches the top of the first go round. Suddenly he finds his body beneath him and sinks deeper into the seat. He's just in time to see the sun sinking into the ocean, the other ocean, a good distance across the strip of land. The gondola then comes down into the coolness of the trees. A'naf calls out to Stewart to ask whether he can slow it down. The big wheel tumbles into a gentle swirl. A'naf exhales. The big wheel climbs out of the trees and into the night above. He calls out to thank Stewart.

Just as A'naf reaches the top, the big wheel bumps to a stop. In just these few moments, the sun has dipped below the horizon. He relaxes back into the seat and looks up to the stars coming out of the falling light. Are they the signposts of higher intelligence or are they the ceiling lights in an apparently vast theatre? He clears his mind and becomes watchful over it. The only thing he lets in is the air and after a while he even holds onto this. He drifts and falls away from himself.

\* \* \*

He is back in his room releasing his breath. Where did he go? The meditation is over and a fine thread of experience lingers in the room, though his mind is blank. It is the presence of something cool and familiar, though with the taste of a foreign land. Some new contact has been made in the

wires and fibers of his body that is not entirely clear to him. He is wearing a hoodie sitting on his haunches, hands on his thighs, house sandals neatly arranged. He sits on his haunches as if he is sitting atop the big wheel of life surveying the land between the moments of time, the land from which time comes. Strange. A torrent of energy rushes up and down his spine and he shivers with its flow. In the pit of his gut he feels that death is not far, it is so not far that it is close, very close, even living within him. He cannot reconcile this into a clear thought and he wonders at the incongruity of the impression.

There is a gentle knock on the door, "Stewart?" his wife calls softly. "I'm going to bed now."

"Yes, I'm coming soon sweet," he responds.

## A SUFI ENNEAGRAM

**Anthony Blake**

"Vasilev learned that Gurdjieff also found among the Sufi Masters the knowledge that the time wheel represented a stable primordial law, which could be grasped and understood through many different modalities of perception." From *Entering the Circle* by Olga Kharatidi



Claims have been made ascribing the enneagram to Sufi tradition. As yet, however, no one has offered any documentary proof for such claims. This seems strange, in the light of the extensive writings of Sufi masters available to us. It would seem to us to present a challenge that should be met.

If we are to address the enneagrammatic implications of Sufi thinking, it would seem appropriate to begin with one of the greatest Sufis of them all, Jellaladin Rumi; and with his greatest work, the *Mathnawi*. This extraordinary book is a thesis on human and divine love, constructed in such a way that their meeting in us can be understood. Rumi, the great lover, shows us

how we can pass from our human experience of love - embodied in our sexuality - to the love of Unity, which is beyond even the creative act.

"A true lover is proved by his pain of heart;  
No sickness is there like sickness of heart.  
The lover's ailment is different from all ailments;  
Love is the astrolabe of God's mysteries.  
A lover may hanker after this love or that love,  
But at the last he is drawn to the KING of love."  
(translation by Whinfield)

The sickness of heart he describes is prefigured in the wondrous opening lines of the *Mathnawi*, where Rumi speaks of the pain in the reed torn from its bed to be formed into a flute (the *ney*): "Listen to the sound of the reed-flute, how it complains, lamenting its banishment."



Both modern scholars and people attracted to Mevlevi mysticism have shunned any analysis of this great work. Both groups tend to regard it as the result of a creative outpouring that has no rhyme nor reason. For someone to find exact structures of thought in its composition may even be regarded as impiety. But this is what we are to do. The impetus for our attempt has largely come from the work of one of Bennett's pupils, Simon Weightman, Head of Religious Studies in the School of Oriental and African Studies in London. He himself has published a study of Book One of the *Mathnawi* that shows it as a 'ring composition', a form of narrative to be found in ancient texts.

### **Narrative Structure in Ancient Texts**

We must begin by stating that most ancient texts, spiritual or otherwise, reveal a high degree of patterning in the way they are composed. The most prevalent form is circular. Narrative will start at a certain point, to which it returns; though with heightened meaning. As the narrative unfolds, it goes through what is called a chiasmic twist, that is, where strands 'cross-over' as in an X. This means the sequential order of the first half is repeated, but in reverse, in the second half.

The repetitions of themes or types of episode are not identical but show an important difference. If we imagine a circle with the distinct episodes of the narrative as points around its circumference, then pairs of episodes across the circle left and right represent complementary actions. What is expanding in the one becomes contracting in the other. What is 'bad' in the one becomes 'good' in the other.

We must be reminded already of the enneagram. The enneagram shows an action as a circle and has such complementary pairings in the horizontal. The left and right hand sides of the enneagram are complementary. The right hand side tends to be 'material' and the left-hand side, 'spiritual'. In the first half we are expanding outwards and in the second, concentrating inwards.

### **The Tale of the Handmaiden**

So far, however, we have nothing that indicates an understanding of the nine-fold structure of the enneagram, nor its construction out of three interweaving strands (or processes). It is then, with some surprise, that we discover that the very first story of the *Mathnawi*, the story of the Prince and the Handmaiden, falls into nine episodes and shows exactly the intervention of two 'shocks' just as we have explained in our various writings on the 'enneagram of process'.

The story is disturbing. A prince, enraptured by a handmaiden, acquires her only to find that she falls ill. A 'higher' physician diagnoses that she is ill from unrequited love and arranges for her beloved to be married to her. The same physician then administers poison to him, destroying his beauty so that she turns from him, to be fully united at last with the Prince. All such 'immoral' stories, similar to those we find in the Bible, refer to the intervention of higher order truth, which is beyond criticism. Spelling out the story more fully, we have this sequence:

#### *0. The Prince alone*

1. The Prince sees the handmaiden and entices her to go with him
2. She falls ill and all ordinary physicians (who do not call on the will of God) fail to diagnose her illness

#### *3. The Prince prays and a physician is sent from Heaven*

4. He diagnoses the illness as longing for a goldsmith in Samarkand
5. The goldsmith is sent for and married to the maiden
6. *Under divine command, the physician poisons the Goldsmith*
7. The goldsmith loses his beauty and his attraction for the handmaiden.
8. She turns away from him to the Prince
9. *Prince and maiden are united*

We can easily see the intervention of the physician coming in at points 3 and 6. He comes from Heaven, that is, from the world of Will. The central theme in Islam is the Will of God, to which we need to submit (Islam means 'submission'). The ordinary physicians who do not call on the Will of God (at 2, they are not in touch with the triangle) are incapable of making any progress.

The physician being sent from Heaven is represented as the line 9-3. The line 3-6 represents the work of this physician. His last act, under the command of heaven, is represented in the line 6-9. This last act carries the meaning 'it must be so'. It is sometimes referred to the realm of *jabarut*, which means 'being under the direct command of the will of God'. *Jabarut* is the realm of the final, third phase of the enneagram. It is the world of Will in which we find the paradox that beings who attain freedom come under the condition of 'slaves' who have no choice.

Rumi wrote about himself: "The result of my life can be summarised in three words - I was immature, I matured and I was consumed".

The passage of the unfortunate goldsmith into decay represents the inevitable culmination of any material process. We must remember that the process started right at the beginning continues all the way round. All actions in the world arise and then decay. If we rely on outward beauty then we will be subject to betrayal. The failure of the physicians to diagnose the sickness at point 2 is echoed by the failure of the maiden to be true to her love at point 7.

It is even more startling to see that the healing work of the divine physician is *undone*. We might be reminded of the harsh saying: 'The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away; praise be to the Lord!' This is terribly important. The results of our 'work on ourselves' need to be sacrificed in order to enter into the truly spiritual world. Gurdjieff illustrated this point in his own autobiography by telling of the time in which he had to resolve to abandon the use of his advanced psychic powers. The healing action plays the role here of the 'artificial' intervention in life that we always find in the enneagram. The 'shock' for this artificial process comes at just at the point when only decline is possible, that is at point 6.

The shock at point 6 represents the 'hand out of heaven' that rescues us from the dream world. The maiden and her lover have six months of happiness. Whatever they could have from that is fulfilled. The inner line from 8 to 5 represents a 'divine disturbance'. It appears that the maiden is being torn away again from her heart's desire. She is, however, being brought into the realm of true union. She can now become united with the Prince. The separation we had on the right hand side is being replicated on the left-hand side. Only, now it is the basis of a higher unity.

In general, we read again and again of the reality revealed when the veil of the *nafs* or passions is removed. Hindu literature has its own versions, for example, the maiden pursued by a lover collects the excrement from her body to show him, to 'wake him up' to the reality. Gurdjieff spoke of the inevitable result of age in thinning the delusional covering over what is really happening.

What is the Prince in all this? He is the higher. The mysterious theme of all great spiritual literature is that the higher *seeks us* and we do not seek it. The handmaiden is we, male or female. The higher is striving to reach us, to inform us, to give us what it is. We do not receive the higher because we do not want it. When we think we perceive the higher, it is as if we are looking into a reflective pool and seeing the higher 'upside down'. It is inevitable that we desire the beloved, but we seek the beloved outside of ourselves until we are exhausted. Then we can undergo what Gurdjieff called the 'reversal of forces'.

## Form and Content

The circular and chiasmic form of ancient literature was, perhaps, taken up by Rumi and turned into a vehicle for the expression of new insights into Love, that Bennett called the *unitive energy*. Remember that Rumi was close in time to Meister Eckhart, who saw 'beyond the trinity'. To have this seeing is to be *of* Love. Just as the true musician attains a condition of being informed by Music itself, so can the lover become informed by Love.

The rather pompous but brilliant esotericist René Guenon saw the principle very well. He said that we do have analogues of higher reality in our everyday experience, only it always appears to us upside down, in the inverse. In the enneagram, this becomes blatantly obvious. Our ordinary human love is a way by which we can attain the higher love. But it will not be as an extension, but as an inversion.

The passage of transformation undergoes a twist 'halfway'. In the enneagram, this is shown in the step from point 4 to point 5 by the inner lines: these two points are maximally separated in the inner sequence, which exhibits a reversal of direction. Point 5 is pulled from the future while point 4 is pushed from the past. Gurdjieff called this region the 'harnel-aoot' or the 'middle of the eight'.

When, as is common in contemporary culture, people say 'I love you' they often separate themselves from the deeper truth of 'We are in love'. Who is it that can make love happen? If we claim this for ourselves then we despoil its origins. In order to go from 'I love you' to 'we are in love' means annihilation. There is no 'you' or 'I': a constant theme in Rumi's writings.

A frequent theme in Sufism is *fana-baqa*: 'annihilation-being'. By being extinguished we come to be. This is the theme par excellence of point 6 of the enneagram. But it can only be countenanced by those who see that all their desires, efforts and aims are as *nothing* besides the ultimate condition. What is represented in the enneagram as a series of steps, presented in cold-blooded clarity, is the very substance of loving fire. The form of the symbol carries with it the content of an immense reversal in the way we understand anything.

## Inner Lines

The inner lines are the meanings that emerge from the story. In 4-2 we see the *reason* for the maiden's illness is her separation from the goldsmith, but in 2-8 we see the *truth* of it is that she is to be brought nearer to God. The line 8-5 contrasts the greater marriage with the lesser marriage. The line 5-7 shows how what is inevitable is accelerated, so that what may have to have waited until after death is realised now. The line 7-1 is a comparison of the two states of the maiden in turning to the Prince: at 7 she turns out of her own nature while at 1 she had to be enticed by gold.

The first line 1-4 is an echo of the opening lines of the *Mathnawi*, telling of the reed of the flute torn from its home.

These relatively crude remarks are hopefully enough to entice the reader to go back to the *Mathnawi* and listen to its song. It is a very precise and highly structured composition. As we 'hear' the underlying meanings, our minds are travelling the inner lines of the story. Such a story is constructed so that we can best compare different episodes and feel for ourselves what they mean in their mutual illumination. We do not have to have the story 'explained' but can hear the inner story for ourselves. We do not so much need the moral commentary, as a capacity for hearing two or more versions of the same episodes together. This had always been the way of ancient narrative. The inner story was built into the narrative itself and needed no interpreter to invent it. Gurdjieff called this *legominism*: it is when the structure of the composition is so designed that we are confronted with data that does not make sense in the ordinary way; which, otherwise, we would not become conscious of.

Contrary to many recent concerns with the 'coding' inherent in ancient texts, the point is not the coding but what the coding transmits. As we repeat the story, it becomes deeper in us. There comes a point when the 'implicate' inner triangle - the 'Holy Ghost' of the story - begins to speak directly. *It is then that we have a sacred text.*

Whenever we hear the lines of the *Mathnawi*, we may remember that this is no 'expression' but a current of understanding. This current contains the way to itself. It is as in the *Hadith* (saying of the Prophet): "I know my Lord by my Lord".

## **Crazy Reflections**

In his book *The Sufis* Idries Shah claims that the impact of Sufism on western culture was considerable. In some way, about a thousand years ago, a current of love entered into Europe that could only have been inspired from an independent source. In the aftermath we saw the rise of the Troubadours, the *Divine Comedy* of Dante and other manifestations that saved Europe from its barbarity. The Muslims taught us empirical science. They connected us to other cultures.

How these influences came to operate is not known. The only thing we know is that, later, Europe became the locus of the new global culture based on science and technology. It seems that there is little of the Lover left in the world. Instead, we have the awesome prospects of the beginning and the end of the universe, leaving us very afraid in the middle of it all.

The wheel of the enneagram turns. We may be faced with the prospect of an incursion of an energy that is beyond Love. Bennett called this the *transcendent energy* and Alice Bailey called it the *First Ray* (of Will-Power). Whatever stage of 'energy' has come to be realised leads us into the prospect of the next. Just as, every enneagram leads us to the threshold of another stage.

Rumi's story begins with consciousness, goes through creativity and ends in unity. Consciousness or reason fails at point 3 and has to be superseded by another kind of energy: the creativity signified by the holy physician. The consummation of the marriage of maiden and goldsmith is a creative work. There remains, beyond creativity, the unitive energy of love.

We might consider an enneagram that begins with creativity, goes through love or unity and ends in the transcendent. We suspect that the religions of the world have failed. This 'failure' is

thoroughly on schedule. Although the majority of people either ignore this crisis or revert into vague 'new ageism', we have found that Love is not enough. As creativity was not enough. As consciousness was not enough. And so on.

Ibn Arabi, another great Sufi taught us this. *We have to know*. We, little human beings, have to know about all that great stuff about distant galaxies and angels. To get to this we have to give up being unified. The very differences and divergence we discover at every turn is our new reality. Each of us is being revealed as the will of a distinct reality. We will have to live in a world that is being made by ten or more billion distinct realities. Each of us is becoming a religion!

It is because Rumi said it all so well, so perfectly and completely and forever, that what we have in front of us is something entirely new. It hardly matters whether or not Rumi 'knew' the enneagram. He was a man of understanding and love and so would find the truth by whatever means. Can we be the same with the enneagram or anything else? We say that what matters is the *story* that is being told. The 'characters' that appear in any story serve the story. The story has one underlying import: to describe how we go from ignorance to truth, from the selves we have invented to our original being, from the dying past to the emergent future.

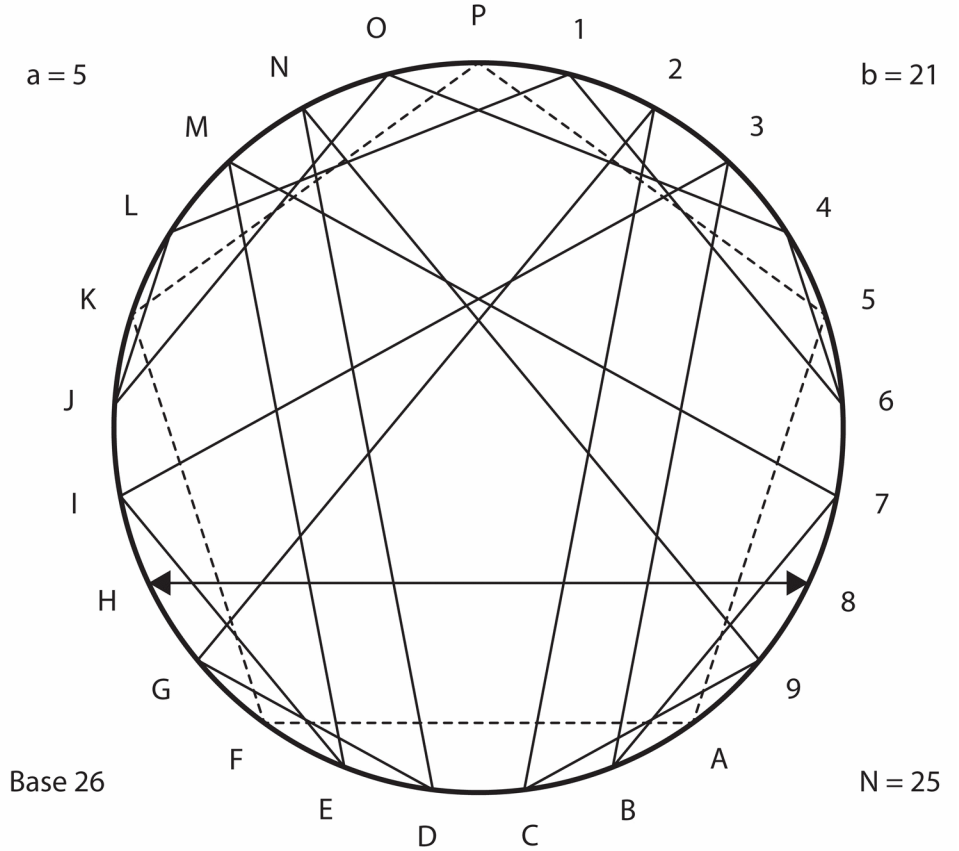
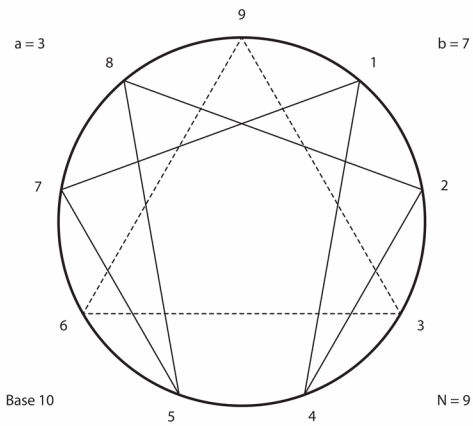
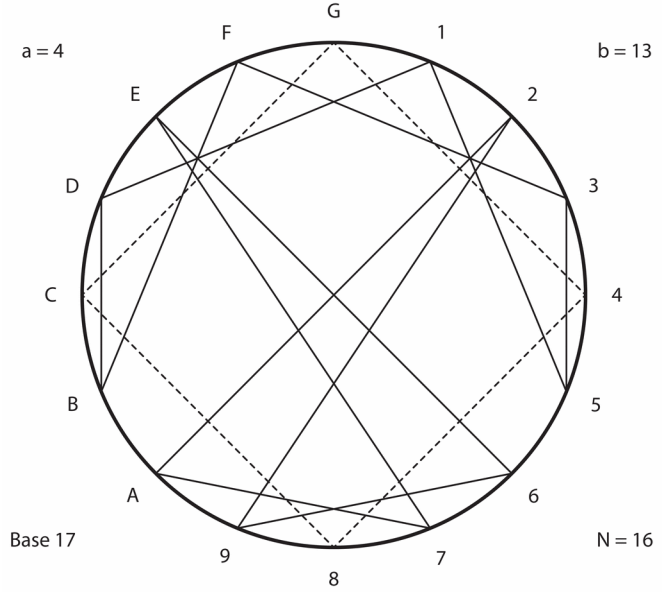
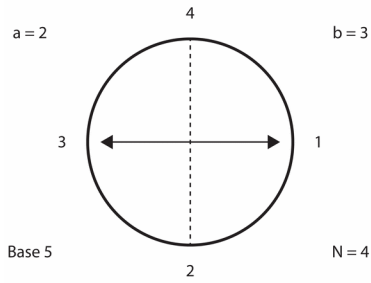
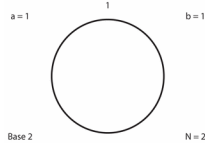
There has been a Gnostic version of the story: that creativity is a veil. All the working of our powers comes from the world of the 'демиург' or higher powers and has to be superseded. In Rumi's tale, the 'poison' that the physician gives is a truth-serum, the true 'holy drug' which is not a vehicle of psychic enhancement as proposed by fantasists of today, but a means of stripping away illusion. At point 6 in the enneagram we have the whole created world as a *veil*. About the same time as Rumi wrote his *Mathnawi*, an English mystic was writing *The Cloud of Unknowing*, one of the world's classics on contemplation (wherein creativity is suspended).

The enneagram does not 'explain' or dictate such ideas. It is simply a means of confronting them to the degree that we are able, so that we may ask ourselves at any moment what we are to do next.

*The above is an extract from the additional material to be included in the new e-book version of The Intelligent Enneagram*

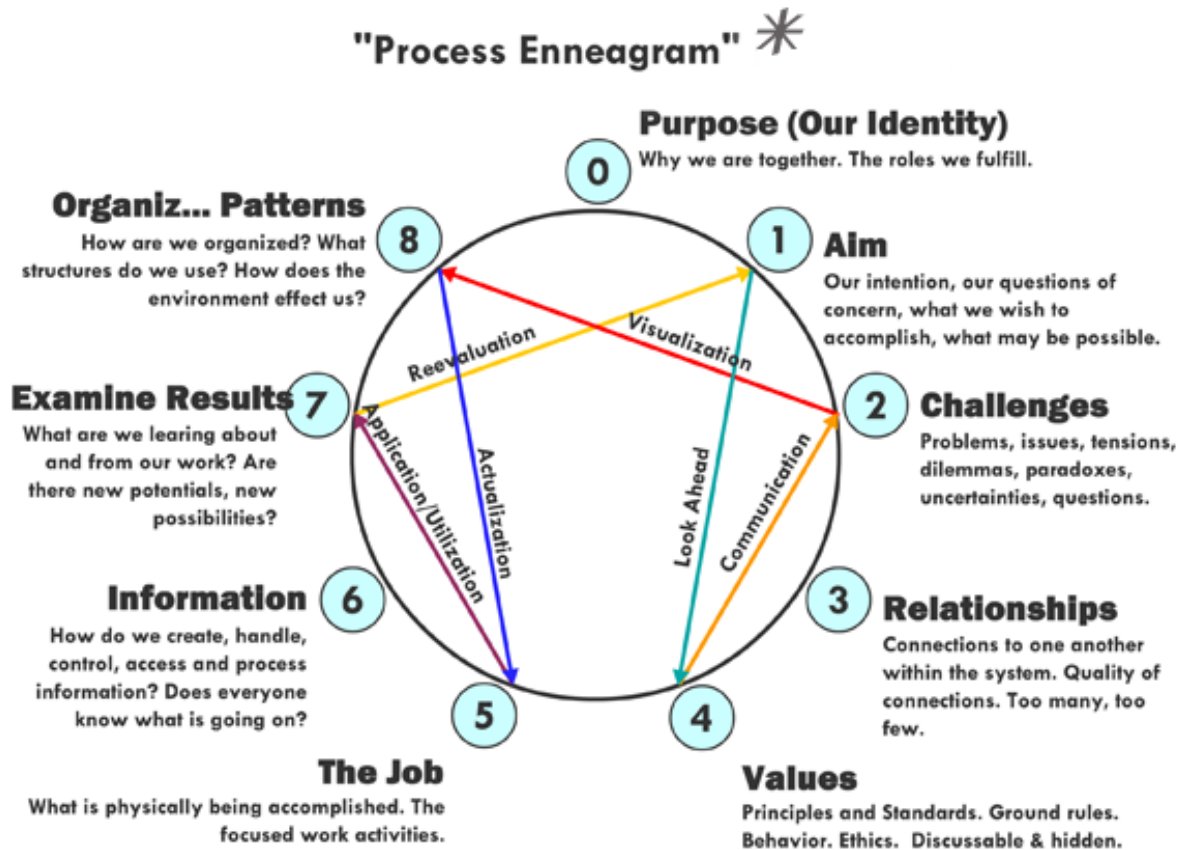
# THE S-GRAMS OF THE 'ENLARGING WORLD'

taken from 'Coda' to new ebook version of 'Intelligent Enneagram'



# Getting to Work while forming New Structures

Steffan Soule



My business background is in the Performing Arts, Education & Consulting with an emphasis on understanding structures that help us keep sight of the big picture while we integrate and improve the parts of a process. Basically that's process improvement, but it's actually more than that.

When studying Richard Knowles' Process Enneagram\*, one can see—at point-eight—the Structures surrounding our Work or Job at point-five have a dramatic influence over our effectiveness.

Note: To read this along with the symbol, especially if you are new to this way of thinking with the Nine Term Symbol, "NTS Thinking", it helps to have the symbol printed and in front of you (or to arrange two browser windows to see the NTS and the text simultaneously). A Nine Term Symbol, an "NTS", is also referred to as an enneagram.

Our Relationships at point 3 can be tuned—in order to serve the activity and to process the information (6) efficiently. There are levels and ranges of what we must care for and attend to in order to create this tuning together in our world of relationships.

When Knowles speaks of Information (6), he means all of the data, facts and ongoing torrent of information about anything at all related to our work. I do not normally consider Information to represent one of the three forces, but in this way, I can see it does represent one part of the triad.

Some companies control this flow and restrict it to the point where it slows down the productivity while others may not restrict it enough to keep precious information from the competition. There is a need for everyone to have access to the pertinent information to perform their role. There is a need for the Relationships (3) to utilize the Information such that line 5-7 can serve to combine the Job and the Information in the most effective way. (Naturally, the LINE does not do it, people do. This is "NTS language".)

To make a living as a magician, as I do, or in any arts business where you're selling something that is not like food or shelter, you not only have to love what you do, but you have to be efficient.

By listening to the needs of my business, I ended up paying attention to the structures that contribute to and support: efficiency, sustainability, and choosing effective actions within a whole system. This is point-eight in the Knowles Nine Term Symbol. What he shows through hands on experience is that groups can use this to become **Self Organizing** very quickly. Why? Because at point-eight—where the Organizational Structures support the Job (point-five)—we can create the best structures for our business. We can form these structures together! But we need to be able to move through our work flow using the inner lines (The Compass) in addition to everything else.

The Compass is the figure made by the inner lines and is explained in my book, *Accomplish The Impossible*, as containing aspects or secrets required for guiding a process to completion with higher grades of quality through repetition.

In any case, as a bi-product of working like this, I wound up with a tangible tool for sustainable change and process improvement. I call it the NTS (since the word enneagram is often used for other meanings), and I share it in my book called *Accomplish The Impossible*. Anyone who has studied the Nine Term Symbol can quickly see that the one above works wonders in a consulting scenario. And the NTS in general has turned into an online web tool that enables users to create, share and store their ideas while they look at problems, come up with solutions, and share understanding across disciplines.

The primary benefit of using a specific structure for clarifying aims and ideas is that when the structure matches the needs of the activities, it enables people—individuals and teams—to become self organizing and to gather the emotional commitment and will to carry a process to completion. And this can happen very quickly when working with the NTS featured here.

Creating a common language based on structures that help people manage values and principles is priceless for a business operation. Too often people move forward on a plan without a way to collectively organize their ideas and without a common language so they can communicate about ongoing results. Now this works when a company has momentum and big bucks are flying in the door. But when an effort is new or when it's geared up to reform an old system, what's needed



then is a new pattern. A new pattern that's inclusive and more consciously organized (than the old ones) so that people can stay ahead of the game instead of just reacting to circumstances.

That's what we do in addition to providing magic shows. We create whole systems technologies that are results oriented and range from very simple to complex enough to deal with large projects. My experience with structures has given me the insight to recognize that Richard Knowles, in his book *The Leadership Dance*, has pin pointed one of the most useful Nine Term Symbols for restoring and transforming corporate activity from uncertainty into action toward values and aims. There is no doubt after reading his work described in his book, *Leadership Dance*, that his many years of experience and direct application at DuPont and other companies have advanced the practical uses of what he calls "the Process Enneagram."

(\*The Process Enneagram © by Richard Knowles is used here with permission from the author. The labels on the six Inner Lines are from the book *Accomplish The Impossible* by Steffan Soule.)

## A Practice in Search of a 'Good' Theory

by Ilana Nevill



Three days ago a hitherto undiscovered e-mail Tony Blake had sent me last May suddenly emerged from some obscure corner in my computer where 'compacted' mail seems to get stored. It arrived just after the final section of a three-part case study about an adolescent girl whose deformed spine 'had to be surgically corrected' had been completed as my first ever written attempt at coming to grips with intricate questions concerning a pertinent theory of the Feldenkrais Method as an approach to *learning how to learn*, a theory that constitutes an alternative to the usual largely neuro-physiological arguments cobbled together in order to be able to answer such questions as : 'What are we actually doing? – How can we "explain" *that* to society, to interested scientists and to the general public?' etc.

One of Tony's observations in that e-mail sums up very neatly the tough mental struggle for clarity that began in 1986, right at the beginning of the first British Feldenkrais Training in London, when exploring unaccustomed movements, I *sensed, felt, and knew* with extraordinary certainty that the originator of the method about which I wanted to learn *must* be familiar with Gurdjieff's teachings:

'There appears to be so much work to do to even get near a "good" theory of Feldenkrais; but that may be a mistaken attitude. Sometimes it is better to adopt the view that the "answer" already exists somewhere and we only have to stumble across

it. It will certainly be “out there” amidst the mass of human mentation.’ (Tony Blake 14/05/2010)

Those words describe the entire process of stumbling around, more or less blindly to begin with, leading gradually to discovery and piecing together of possible elements that might fit into the complex puzzle of a theory that would do justice to the facts of our ‘objectively’ observable behaviour and to the ‘subjectively’ perceived ‘reality’ of personal experience, both of equal importance in Feldenkrais learning.

About 15 years ago I asked Tony for a little guidance and support for this project, and he even agreed to ‘undergo’ the experience of a *Functional Integration* session as the one-to-one lessons adapted to individual needs are called. Until two years ago that remained the only *FI* session because Tony felt allergic to being ‘manipulated’.

Tony was by no means the only person who preferred not to be touched, at least initially; and since I had to work occasionally with extremely sensitive people (for instance in the local hospice) a new, less direct, less intrusive way of ‘touching’ a person suggested itself: The variously shaped and sized inflatable balls I began experimenting with in my Feldenkrais practice (In the ‘lost’ e-mail Tony suggested calling that approach ‘PLIANT BALLS – The non-aggressive tools for helping people to integrate’.) soon became a kind of Third Force learning tool, safeguarding a respectful, maybe even sacred, space that turned the non-verbal dialogue of *Functional Integration* into a graceful effortless dance Moshe Feldenkrais himself intended: where it is often impossible to tell which of the two partners is leading and who is being lead.

Some colleagues (especially in France where we now live) began to appreciate the introduction of such learning tools into Feldenkrais work, because the reduction of effort involved results in a considerable increase of awareness for both ‘learner’ and ‘teacher’ and also stimulates their creative playfulness, mentioned so often in Feldenkrais Trainings but rarely truly experienced.

While preparing to write the third, more theoretical part of the case study “Anais and Her Scoliosis”, some chance intuition took me back to an inspiring talk by the great cyberneticist Heinz von Foerster on ‘*Ethics and second-order cybernetics*’, the opening address at an International Conference about ‘Systems and Family Therapy’ in Paris, 1990. Although I had read this talk before at least twice, it was only now that the penny dropped: All we need for a ‘good’ theory is to be found in the knowledge and wisdom expressed in everything Heinz von Foerster said and wrote, especially towards the end of his life.

In this talk von Foerster invokes the spirit of the ‘mamas and papas of cybernetic thought and action’, though he does not mention by name the *first somatic cyberneticist*, as Feldenkrais was occasionally called, who was one of his friends and dialogue partners for many years. Von Foerster, also known as the *Socrates of Cybernetics*, quotes at some length another of Feldenkrais’s friends, the anthropologist Margaret Mead. Mead used to emphasize her interest in ‘the significance of the set of cross-disciplinary ideas which we first called “feed-back” and then called “teleological mechanisms” and then called “cybernetics” – a form of cross-disciplinary thought which made it

possible for members of many disciplines to communicate with each other easily in a language which all could understand.”

During a visit to Israel in 2000 Tim and I had a chance to look at the extraordinary library in Moshe Feldenkrais’s former apartment where all those cross-disciplinary ideas were still sitting on the shelves. We were told that Feldenkrais spent most of his nights studying everything he could lay his hands on: initially to find ways of preventing a knee operation with uncertain outcome. His Method gradually developed on the basis of theoretical studies and experiential exploration using his own body as a laboratory, laying the foundations for tackling a mighty task just beginning to impinge on public awareness. What he wrote in his book *AWARENESS THROUGH MOVEMENT* speaks of the same hopeful optimism that characterized many of his cyberneticist friends despite all their clear-sighted scepticism :

‘I believe that we are living in a historically brief transition period that heralds the emergence of the truly human man’. (p. 48)

Heinz von Foerster based similar hopes on the discovery of the role of the observer in modern science which he considered to be the greatest achievement of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. For that reason he was, together with Margaret Mead among the few contemporaries who really understood the full implications of the method Moshe Feldenkrais was refining throughout his life with the aim of fostering conscious awareness by helping people bridge the gap, so seldom noticed, between intending and acting, between thinking one does the appropriate thing to realize one’s intention and actually doing the opposite. Hence the endlessly and patiently repeated invitations in his *Awareness Through Movement* group teaching to “please pay attention”, “listen inside...and see what you are actually doing...” Hence his encouragement to grasp the freedom of choosing what works, what is best for oneself on the basis of one’s own lived experience. (While writing about all this an English friend, coping brilliantly with manic depression, told me on the phone: ‘The main thing Feldenkrais gave me is the freedom to take my own experience as valid.’.) Moshe Feldenkrais was probably one of the very first ‘teachers’ who created a learning environment and exploration of movement that got people to observe both their own actions and their experience objectively and subjectively, switching between looking inside and outside without judgemental interference and effortful striving for success:

‘Recognizing one’s value is important at the start of self-improvement, but for any real improvement to be achieved, regard for the self will have to be relegated to second place. Unless a stage is reached at which self-regard ceases to be the main motivating force, any improvement achieved will never be sufficient to satisfy the individual. In fact, as a man grows and improves, his entire existence centers increasingly on **what** he does and **how**, while **who** does it becomes of ever decreasing importance.’ (*AWARENESS THROUGH MOVEMENT*, P.19)

Similar observations are found throughout Moshe Feldenkrais’ books, but unfortunately are either not read at all or overlooked as so much irrelevant bla-bla. However, such statements confirmed right at the start of my investigations that I was on the right track in searching for deeper

dimensions in a Method that nowadays can all too easily degenerate into all sorts of superficial bodywork.

Instead of adding an excerpt from the theoretical article addressed mainly to Feldenkrais colleagues which I've just completed, here, as a much more appropriate alternative for DuVersity members, is a celebration of Heinz von Foerster' 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary, that appeared - by chance - in the same number of the German Feldenkrais Journal carrying the first part of the previously mentioned case study. Although this article followed mine, it was only much later and after so much necessary?, unnecessary? mental stumbling around that I realized that in itself this represents a pretty good basis for the 'good' theory I started to look for nearly 25 years ago.

## **Truth is the Invention of a Liar**

### **Centenary of the Birth of Heinz von Foerster (1911 – 2002)**

**by Detlef Lafrentz, translated by Tim Nevill**

*Heinz von Foerster grew up in an affluent middle-class home in Vienna where he had early contact with artists and philosophers. Ludwig Wittgenstein became an honorary and much revered uncle, and Foerster knew his Tractatus logico philosophicus by heart. Foerster studied physics and completed his Ph.D at Breslau in 1944. Memory, the book he published in 1948, attracted the attention of neurophysiologist and cyberneticist Warren McCulloch who invited him to participate in the celebrated Macy conferences where cybernetics (as a meta-science above other forms of knowledge) saw the light of day. There he got to know the great scientists of the time: Gregory Bateson, Margaret Mead, John von Neumann, Norbert Wiener, Claude Shannon ...*

*From 1958 until 1975 he was director of the Biological Computer Laboratory at the University of Urbana, Illinois, where celebrated scientists with diverse specialisations pursued interdisciplinary research. Here he also worked with Umberto Maturana and published papers by Francisco Varela.*

*HvF had to retire at 65 but then carved out a niche for himself as lecturer on a wide range of topics. He was much in demand as a speaker at congresses of social scientists, family therapists, psychologists, and specialists in organisational development.*

One day back in 1997 (during the Feldenkrais International Training Course at Strasbourg) I had the great good fortune to be sitting in the same car as Heinz von Foerster. He spoke enthusiastically about visiting Salzburg's cathedral - especially about its portal, framed by four pillars to the left and right, each of which could be rotated so as to allow a choice between three different figures pointing forwards. That means the portal can look different every day for many months. Heinz von Foerster was passionate about multiplicity of possibilities, alternatives forms of action, and variants, which for him at the same time also signified freedoms. His ethical imperative was: "Act always so as to increase the number of choices".

Here already parallels with the work of Moshe Feldenkrais are inescapable: "The mature human being has at least three alternatives for every action".

Heinz von Foerster (HvF), one of the very first cyberneticists as well as a scientist and philosopher, was a friend of the Feldenkrais family. Moshe invited him to the 1977 training in San Francisco to participate in an Awareness Through Movement session and then talk about cybernetics and much besides. He gave the opening address at the 1989 conference of the American Feldenkrais Guild, and during the Strasbourg Feldenkrais training presented three days of talks on what he called Systemics. HvF thereby upgraded students into “Feldenkraisologists” serving genuine aspirations towards research in Awareness Through Movement and Functional Integration.

### **What Are Systemics ?**

The prefix *syn* signifies *together*. In a system all the elements operate together and are linked with one another. That contrasts with the prefix *sci* as in *scissors* or *science*. Here things are separated from one another. Reductionism is the classic example of that with its dissection of a phenomenon or system into component parts. This method was been highly successful in the natural sciences (the ‘hard sciences’). However HvF views its application to the social sciences (the ‘soft sciences’) as having been catastrophic: financial crises, unemployment, loss of meaning, ecological disasters, poverty, hunger ... No living system can be understood in that way. HvF expressly affirmed his allegiance to a holistic viewpoint. “The hard sciences are so successful because they deal with the *soft problems*. The soft sciences have to struggle because they take on the *hard problems*”.

Systemics has three strands: cybernetics, constructivism, and ethics, but HvF did not talk about ethics since ethics were implicit in his language and his thoughts. “I fear that when ethics turn up and become explicit, its breath is suffocated in debates about morality”.

### **Cybernetics**

Today cybernetics are often seen in conjunction with computers, computer technology, artificial intelligence, etc, which is a fatal limitation. There are many definitions such as: a science of management, a philosophy, a way of life. The best-known is the definition by Norbert Wiener, often called the founder of cybernetics: Cybernetics is the science of regulatory and control systems in man and machine. A system is generally termed cybernetic if an effector (muscle, motor, wind) affects this system, a sensor (sense organ or technical sensor, sail) establishes the inner state, and a comparator (brain, computer programme) compares the actual-value with a previously determined target-value. This amounts to something akin to a programme for fulfilment of objectives.

A simple example. A room temperature of 20°C is set on a thermostat. A sensor establishes that the current temperature is 19°C and a comparator that the temperature desired has not yet been achieved. The heating starts to operate. The sensor registers 20°C. Comparator: objective achieved. Heating goes off. Only when the sensor establishes that the temperature has dropped does the heating start up again. This is the way in which millions of processes function in our organism, in nature, in society. Another (invented) example: My son is crying. Objective: He should stop. I say: A boy doesn’t cry. Reaction: My son cries even more. Actual-value comparison: Objective not achieved. Second attempt. Change of attitude, empathy: My son, what makes you sad ? (or something like that). Reaction: Child stops crying and tells you why. Objective achieved. In this connection we often speak of feedback.

## **Circularity**

Circularity is a crucial term in cybernetics. The outcome of a process is at the same time the starting-point for what follows. A – B – C – A or even A – A (self-referential). This way of proceeding is taboo within the scientific process since it opens the door to paradox. In a well-known example the Cretan says all Cretans are liars. If this Cretan is telling the truth then he is a liar. But if he is lying he is really telling the truth.

## **The Observer**

HvF, often called the *Socrates of Cybernetics*, points to the fact that the principles of circularity and self-reference conflict with the deepest principles of scientific observation: objectivity and the separation of observer and observed. The meaninglessness of that demand is very quickly clear to us. If the observer's characteristics are supposed to be excluded, then so too should his capacity to describe be set aside. But description is precisely what an observer does. These thoughts led HvF to develop cybernetics still further. He then called description of observed systems first-order cybernetics and description of observing systems second-order cybernetics.

With description of the observer we have now reached what HvF calls the greatest discovery of the 20th century. Anyone who uses a camera knows that he changes the situation. People behave differently from usual. When I as a Feldenkrais teacher walk through the room during an Awareness Through Movement lesson I change something, particularly when I stop near someone. However if I take into account that human perception, which underlies every observation and description, is subjective, then any observation must be treated with caution. HvF went further: The problem lies even deeper. It is not just that we do not know. It is also the case that we do not know that we don't know. That is double ignorance or second-order ignorance. Every observation first says something about the observer him- or herself. Anyone who claims to speak the truth says something about himself but not about the truth. That is the meaning of HvF's sentence: "Truth is the invention of a liar".

## **Constructivism**

This is based on a theory of knowledge (also known as Radical Constructivism, see Ernst von Glasersfeld and Paul Watzlawick) which takes as its starting-point the individual's construction of his own world. HvF even says that each person calculates his/her own world. This entails that human perception is not a depiction of reality but instead created out of one's own inner resources. The biology of human perception shows that a large part of what we perceive has nothing to do with what is happening "out there". HvF is not saying there is no world "out there", only that we don't know what it looks like. The observer would do well to be aware of that.

## **The Feldenkrais Teacher as Observer**

For us as Feldenkrais teachers that involves a great challenge. It's easy to evaluate a pupil (colleagues, the Feldenkrais Association, etc) without becoming aware that we are part of this process. There is a difference between coming to an inner conclusion regarding someone in one of my classes (He's so stiff, in too much of a hurry, clumsy, will never catch on ...) and finding space in myself for appreciating each person within their process. In conversations with colleagues it's

often confirmed that pupils also make visible progress after the teacher has become more inwardly free and tolerant.

Of course the teacher's influence is even more direct in the one-to-one encounter of Functional Integration. Here I directly share my state of being by way of touching the pupil. If I'm dissatisfied or unclear about something, then I communicate that feeling. I also find the client's limits very clearly and confirm them. In that situation I'm easily inclined to attribute lack of progress to the client. But if I'm clear and receptive I allow the client to improve his capacity for learning. I consciously structure a joint process. In the first case we are more concerned with problems, in the second with solutions.

### **The Humanist**

If all perception is subjective, then where do I have something to say? To begin with I can of course always say something about myself, my feelings, my opinions. In that context HvF uses the term *self-referential operator*: I think, I believe. In contrast the *existential operator* says: It is, there exists. That usage raises a claim to truth. This involves a description in which the observer removes himself from the observation. Of course always only deploying the self-referential operator is a huge challenge. In one of HvF's courses he made a deal with his students that they had to put a dollar into the class kitty for any use of the existential operator. After a short time this agreement had to be rescinded since students very quickly went bust.

However there exist questions which we can answer. HvF separated questions into those which are in principle decidable and those which in principle are undecidable. We don't need to answer decidable questions since they have already been answered somewhere. There already exists a framework in which these questions have been raised and answered. One such question asks whether 3, 536, 294 can be divided by 2. We don't need to answer that question since mathematics provide rules which say Yes it can be divided by 2. The questions that cannot in principle be answered include: "How did the universe come into existence?" There are many answers but no one was present. We can only respond to this kind of question with such answers as:

There was a Big Bang fifteen milliard years ago;

or God spoke and there was Light;

or there was a tortoise and on the back of that tortoise ...

Nevertheless if we answer such questions we must take on responsibility for what we say. We have a possibility of choice and are free to answer or not. But there too we are responsible. In his lectures HvF never tired of emphasising the connection between knowledge and conscience, freedom of choice and responsibility. He had enormous trust in development of human potential and encouraged people to pursue their thoughts and ideas. Time and again he spoke about the power of dialogue in the development of knowledge and castigated an education system where children and adults are constricted and *trivialized*.

### *A Personal View of Consequences for Feldenkrais Work*

- 1. We are faced with an ongoing task of developing humility regarding the snares of language and thus of our own thinking as responsible self-referential operators. We should know that we have*

*blind spots and be aware of our own ignorance.*

2. *We need to develop healthy distrust of everything that calls itself scientific. What science ? What foundations in theories of knowledge ?*
3. *HvF's trust in the development of human beings can encourage us. We shouldn't teach anything but rather get out of the way of people's learning-process.*

Detlef Lafrentz's article first appeared in *Feldenkraisforum* 75/2011, the journal of the German Feldenkrais Association

See also : Ethics and Second-Order Cybernetics [www.stanford.edu/group/SHR/4-2/foerster.html](http://www.stanford.edu/group/SHR/4-2/foerster.html)

The Heinz von Foerster Page [www.univie.ac.at/constructivism/HvF.htm](http://www.univie.ac.at/constructivism/HvF.htm)

Radical Constructivism [www.univie.ac.at/constructivism/](http://www.univie.ac.at/constructivism/)