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## EMERGENT SYSTEMS PROCESS PHILOSOPHY

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### A CHALLENGE

Nicholas Rescher writes<sup>1</sup>:

“For it is by no means unfair to the historical situation to say that process philosophy at present remains no more than a glint in the mind’s eye of certain philosophers. A full fledged development of this line of approach simply does not yet exist as an accomplished fact. All that we really have so far are suggestions, sketches, and expressions of confidence. The work of actually developing the process doctrine to the point where it can be compared with other major philosophical projects like materialism or absolute idealism still remains to be done. Many writers have hinted at a process philosophy, but no body has yet really developed one -- not even Whitehead, though he has perhaps gone further in this direction than anyone else.”  
(page 88)

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1. BAFFLING PHENOMENA by Nicholas Rescher (Rowan & Littlefield 1991)

Let's begin to take up Nicholas Reschler's challenge and see if we can advance the state of the art in process philosophy to some small degree. He is specific about the matters that we would need to cover to have an adequate process philosophy. He requests a systematic exposition. This systematic exposition cannot be attempted until the territory has been completely explored. Once the exploration has occurred, then the mapping of the territory may proceed. We are still engaged in the exploration, but we can use his wish list as the outline of this prolegomena in order to get a vision of the ultimate aims. The prolegomena will specify our approach to the answering of these questions. He says that the following issues are not adequately covered by any existing process philosophy, and even if they are covered in a piecemeal fashion, then what is really needed is:

To provide an adequate account of process philosophy, we need cogent and integrated series of well-developed expositions and arguments to articulate and substantiate the central theses of this position.

The points that need to be considered in more detail are the following:

- o An analysis of the conception of process in its various manifestations and an explanation of

which of its features have primary importance for metaphysical purposes.

The contention that will be developed here is that process philosophy does not have an adequate metaphysical grounding. To be precise, no process philosophy to date has grounded itself in the recent discoveries of modern ontology. The developers of most process philosophies take ontology for granted. For the most part they say that processes exist and start from there to develop their systems in which processes, instead of concretized objects, are the basic phenomena. Therefore, I propose to develop a process philosophy that is not ontologically naive, but instead builds upon the discoveries of modern ontology and uses them to define very precisely in what sense processes have Being. Being has become a complex subject in itself which cannot be taken for granted any longer. Underlying Rescher's point is the unease we feel because process philosophy seems to take its ontology for granted instead of exploring it directly. For process philosophy Being is a given and is basically the traditional concept inherited from Aristotle or Kant. It is assumed that processes have Being and are the fundamental kind of entity. Thus, ontology does not really figure into process philosophy except as an assumed ground. We need to address this problem directly by developing a process philosophy which is

ontologically sophisticated.

- o A survey of the major sorts of processes that bear importantly in metaphysical issues.

Where do the major sorts of processes come from? The major sorts of processes must be directly related to the ontological ground itself. In some sense the ontological ground must be a process. This is the point that Heidegger makes when he says that Being is defined as Manifestation or Presencing. Heidegger describes the process of manifestation as a process in which Being is mixed with Time. Thus in many senses Heidegger is a process philosopher, but in the best sense of the word because he sees the process as being the process of manifestation itself. Manifestation is not an unarticulated phenomena, but breaks into kinds and has its own structure which Heidegger describes in terms of showing and hiding. So deep process philosophy must consider the articulation of manifestation. It will not be a philosophy that sees processes as contained in a pure plenum of Being, but instead sees Being itself as a process of revealing and uncovering. It will see this process as articulated into its own kinds which underlie all processes and upon which the articulation of the different kinds of processes is built.

- o A thorough-going examination of the nature of emergence, novelty, innovation and creativity.

This is the real failing point of all process philosophies. The understanding of emergence is an issue raised by GH Mead in his book The Philosophy Of The Present, but which has never really been satisfactorily taken up again. However, no process philosophy can claim to be worthwhile unless it adequately describes how new things come into existence. This is a major failing of all philosophy. But process philosophy takes up the challenge and places it within its agenda. However, most of the answers to this question are very superficial. This is because processes are not considered in relation to the upwelling of manifestation which is the fundamental process, and in that fundamental process the appearance of novel, emergent phenomena is the core issue that needs to be resolved. How can entirely new things appear? What is the nature of the process that makes this possible? What are the stages of this appearance? How does their appearance relate to changes of Paradigm (ala Kuhn), Epistemes (ala Foucault), and Epochs of Being (ala Heidegger)? These are fundamental questions that are not addressed. Instead, emergence is treated superficially as some sort of physical phenomena which is left unexplained.

- o A clear scheme for distinguishing the salient features of diverse processes: live vs. inert, consciousness vs. unconsciousness.

The ability to distinguish between processes is not addressed. How do we make distinctions which work in the world? This is a very difficult question which is generally left aside. I reformulate this question into the more basic question of how we make what I call non-nihilistic distinctions. That is, distinctions which have some sort of ontological necessity rather than distinctions that merely fade away within a myriad of other competing distinctions. Thus, process philosophy needs to address the issue of how distinctions are made at an ontological level on which all other distinctions are based.

- o A classifying taxonomy of processes of various sorts.

Once you have produced a means of making distinctions, it is necessary to relate those distinctions to each other systematically. Here Rescher's own concept of network-based theorizing in Cognitive Systemitization<sup>2</sup> will come in handy. What is needed is an approach to the reformulation of philosophical categories (like those of Aristotle and Kant) that allow us to connect our

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2. (Rowan & Littlefield 1979)

ontological process philosophy to modern General Systems Theories such as Jumarie and Klir. Rethinking Category Theory is an undertaking that has been started by I. Johansson in his book Ontological Investigations. Thus, some of the groundwork has already been done in this area. The connection of the fundamental processes through categories to general systems is a very important connection that needs to be made if the process philosophy we are building is to shed any light on concrete phenomena.

- o Provision of a cogently developed line of argument for the primacy of process.

The primacy of process for us is related to a deep understanding of ontology as process centered. Process philosophy is really a response to modern physics that discovers processes at the fundamental level of physics. It is generally a type of materialism which considers the material of existence to be in flux. However, process philosophy remains unsophisticated as long as it does not become phenomenological. Seeing processes as occurring out there, and ignoring the processes of consciousness that allow whatever is out there to be seen, leads nowhere. For instance, Jahn, in Margins Of Reality, calls for the study of macro quantum mechanical processes within the realm of intersubjective consciousness and offers some evidence that such

phenomena exist. Process philosophy must be comprehensive, considering all processes, and it must show that it can give a clear understanding to reality by showing how reality itself is a process. The demonstration of the primacy of process is a major task for any process philosophy. Instead of assuming that processes out there are primary, it must show that it is the best way of viewing all phenomena; that all other views are reifications in one way or another.

- o An integrated and coordinated presentation of the scientific and philosophical ideas relating to processes.

Once the connection is made between primary process (manifestation) and secondary processes (vortices within manifestation) through category theory to General Systems theory, then it will be possible to study the impacts of our philosophical ideas of process on our scientific theories concerning actually manifesting processes whether they be physical, biological, social or of whatever kind.

Rescher is right to criticize process philosophy on this score. The closest process theory comes to actually being applied is the work of David Bohm in his theory of the “implicate order” in quantum physics. Generally process philosophy is separated from the actual study of the



phenomena in the same way General Systems theory has been in the past. It is easy to say everything is a system or everything is a set of processes, but difficult to show how this sheds more light on actual phenomena. George Klir has recently come up with a systems theory that has more substance in this regard. And one of the challenges to process philosophy is to come up with similar means to cross this gap. Klir, though, does this by finding general architectural structures for all possible systems. To do a similar job for process philosophy we will, as Rescher suggests, have to find general structures for processes.

- o A systematic survey of the pivotal issues from a process point of view to show how the process approach can avert difficulties.

Once we have produced the architecture of our process philosophy, then it should be seen whether light can be shown on different specific areas of interest which would not be clarified otherwise. Of particular interest here is the questions of what is software and what is cybertimespace. But other issues may be considered as well, such as what lies beyond the conceptual formations of our worldview which give rise to process-centered philosophy in this age and the general historical development of process philosophy within our evolving worldview.

Exploration of the impacts of such a fundamental systems process philosophy on the disciplines of philosophy of science, philosophy of technology, and other such even more specific technical disciplines such as software engineering need to be undertaken.

- o A reasoned schema for distinguishing and characterizing natural processes in a hierarchical format (proto-physical, physical, chemical, biological, social) suitably distinguishing each level form and yet relating it to the next.

One of the main concepts of process philosophy is emergent levels of organization in the universe. The question always arises that besides distinguishing these as empirically different and recognizing their existence, how can we give a cogent account of that arising and articulation of the universe as well as the emergent properties? It is clear that emergent properties themselves cannot be explained from lower level phenomena. However, the arising of emergent levels itself, and the differentiation of levels, should be a proper, more general area of study.

These points that Rescher makes need to be taken seriously, and some attempt to develop a robust process philosophy should be made. Rescher has offered a challenge to us. It is clear that the challenge should be

answered. However, it is not possible to answer the challenge directly. Instead, we must begin exploring the arena within which a robust process philosophy might be developed with a view to gathering the fossils of our own worldview, which may eventually serve as a starting point for the building of a systematic process philosophy that underlies our understanding of systems and the phenomena of emergence that transforms systems. Unless we understand our own worldview and its differences from other key worldviews, we will never really be able to lay truly radical foundations for our understanding of processes. We must first understand our own processes in order to be able to begin to understand general processes within creation.

## **A NEW METHODOLOGY**

A new methodology is proposed as the basic means of building the process philosophy. This methodology has been developed in the field of psychology and is called Heuristic Research. Heuristic Research is compared to other basic methodologies such as phenomenology, hermeneutics, critical theory (dialectics) and structuralism. A synthetic methodology based on all of these, but emphasizing Heuristic Research, is suggested as the means of building the new process philosophy.

Philosophical systems are often limited by the method

used by the architect to approach the project. Here we would like to found our new approach to emergent systems process philosophy on a new methodology. Many philosophies are founded on the methodology of science. Pragmatism is a good example of this. It uses scientific method and also enshrines it as the centerpiece of its philosophy, reducing all human behavior to the supposed way of understanding and acting of the scientist. Other philosophies attempt to generalize scientific paradigms into philosophical systems. Normal process philosophy is perhaps guilty of this. Most of the best philosophy of this century has been based on the insights of phenomenology. Phenomenology is a kind of scientific exploration of consciousness. However, instead of projecting the approach of scientists on everything, or taking the results of scientific investigations and blowing them up to cover other phenomena, phenomenology attempted to produce a science of consciousness which was adequate to its object. Husserl tried many times to found this science rigorously. And from it has come a wealth of new insights far beyond his imaginings. He was very upset that his pupils did not follow him to continue to build the scientific edifice he envisioned. Instead they got the essential idea and developed it in a myriad of ways that went far beyond his dream. Essentially all of the insights of modern ontology flowed from this project.

The methodology of phenomenology arose from the first scientific studies of psychology which were not behavioral. Husserl adapted the approach of Brentano to his purposes. The approach of Brentano focused on intentionality and how it functioned within consciousness. Husserl took up this focus on intentionality and made it central to his phenomenology. Husserl's students accepted the phenomenological methodology which promised to go back to the things themselves and usually combined it with the other great methodology of the human sciences called hermeneutics. Heidegger was the first to realize that these two methods were complementary. Gadamer developed Heidegger's insights by refocusing on hermeneutics which was originally taken from Schliermacher. Phenomenology takes us back to the things themselves, and then hermeneutics allows them to speak to us through the process of circular interpretation. Hermeneutics and phenomenology work together to give some sense that the things can speak to us with their own unique voice which can be overheard beyond our projections on them.

Yet another methodological strain is that of dialectics and structuralism. Dialectics was developed originally by Hegel out of a close reading of Kant and ancient dialogic methods such as those used in Plato's dialogues. Sartre

and Adorno took different but similar directions in order to define the modern equivalent of the dialectical method. In Sartre's Critique Of Dialectical Reason he uses the dialectic on itself in order to develop a new approach to the dilemmas in the Marxian interpretation of Hegel. In Negative Dialectics Adorno attempts to develop, in a different direction, the means of seeing the dialectic in action by looking at it negatively though a critical appraisal of its effects. The dialectic gives a diachronic view of the development of complex systems. Another related but different view is that developed by Chomsky, Piaget and Levi-Strauss called Structuralism. Structuralism is a synchronic view of systems which says that as they evolve, they constantly maintain certain deep structures. These deep structures of language, cognitive development, and myth are maintained by redundancy that is constantly reaffirmed and reconstituted regardless of what changes occur within the system. From this view, dialectical transformation is merely a reassertion of the same pattern at a new level of synthesis. From the structural point of view, the discovery of deep patterns are more important than the understanding of dialectical movements of the system. From the dialectical point of view, the set of contradictions and their resolution is more important.

Here we have enumerated four fundamental methods

which have informed much of the development of philosophy in this century. These methods appear in complementary pairs: Dialectics/Structuralism and Phenomenology/Hermeneutics. These pairs are themselves complementary. D/S pair is complementary to the P/H pair. Where D/S explores the external relations between things, P/H explores the internal relations between things. The relations between things are considered as a system that is engaged in self-overcoming, and as it evolves, it continuously reinforces deep structural relations between things that are redundantly reconstituted. On the other hand, those relations are only known through their appearance in consciousness as objects that can be queried about their meaning. That meaning partially appears as the net of diacritical relations between all things within the system. Thus, semiotics, which links the external relations with inner meanings, is important. Phenomenology allows us to get to the things themselves, and hermeneutics allows us to hear what they have to say themselves beyond our projections of what they might say. (Semiotics allows us to understand those meanings as they relate to all the signs in our field.) Dialectics and structuralism allow us to see that field as a whole system which has both recurring patterns and also is evolving over time with occasional discontinuous leaps or repatternings. This complex of methods has formed the

core of the development of much of science and philosophy in this century. We must understand it, but also we must be prepared to move on to other methods when the right ones appear.

This complex of methods has the effect of distancing us from experience. It is understandable why this would be the case. In this same century, science was on the rise as the uncontested champion of methods for understanding the universe. Science is based on distancing ourselves from the phenomena we study. The goal is to get a view of objective reality. If the humanities are to get any respect at all, they must find a way to distance themselves from the phenomena as well. Thus phenomenology says that every experience is “experience OF something” so that distancing is built into experience itself. So, we can have a science of consciousness which is just as precise and rigorous as any outward science. Hermeneutics says we need a hermeneutic circle by which we continuously move between related things in order to appraise their meaning. Here distance appears as the other thing that is necessary for exploring the meaning of any one thing. Structuralism tells us there is a distance between surface patterns and deep structural patterns. When we look at phenomena, the deep structural patterns remain the same and can be understood if we know how to find them. Dialectics tells us that the interaction between elements



give rise to whole/part relations that will transform into higher level patternings. In order to understand the part, one must see the whole it is a part of and the internal contradictions that lead to transformation. In dialectics there is distancing by the consideration of the parts in relation to the whole. Distancing is the key to understanding what the methods of this century have in common. Now that we are about to enter into another century, we might consider if there are any other methods that might reveal a new direction that we might explore in order to expand our horizons. Formulating a new philosophy without a new methodological framework is a futile activity as it is bound to revolve in the envelope of all the other philosophies that are based on similar methods.

Fortunately for us, there is a new method that has not yet been applied to the development of any philosophical system. This new method has the good feature that it questions distancing as a basic assumption. Like phenomenology, it has been developed in the psychological realm. But unlike phenomenology, it explicitly gives up distancing as a fundamental tenet to gain acceptance in scientific circles. This new method, which I propose to underlie Emergent Systems Process Philosophy, is called *Heuristic Research* and is explained in a book by its developer, Clark Moustakas. Heuristic

research involves complete identification with the phenomena under study. Therefore, it rejects distancing as a criterion of scientific research. Rather, it develops a research method based on lack of distance or encompassing. Here is how Douglass and Moustakas compare Heuristic Research with Phenomenology:

- (1) Whereas phenomenology encourages a kind of detachment from the phenomena being investigated, heuristics emphasizes connectedness and relationship.

This connectedness and relationship is exactly what has been rejected by science as purely subjective. It is clear that subjectivity and objectivity are bound together as empty opposites which ultimately are meaningless. The phenomenological tradition has clearly shown that objects are grounded in consciousness without which they would never be seen. Physics itself has not been able to rid itself of consciousness, and it is fairly well accepted that consciousness plays a role in the outcome of experiments. Those very experiments (Bell's Theorem and its experimental proofs) show us that once two entities are related to each other, they remain related no matter how far apart in spacetime they get. Thus, now even connectedness and relationship are gaining favor in physics which worked so hard to disprove "action at a distance." It is clear that there must be a place for

relationship and connection in our arsenal of philosophical methods. Heuristic research is the first methodology to establish that place. The distancing of phenomenology, hermeneutics, dialectics, and structuralism is transformed under this new method. Instead of establishing a dialogue with the things themselves and using the hermeneutic circle, a more direct means of establishing meaning is used which relies on the relation between the thing under observation and the self. Here the self, the very element banished by objective science, becomes a key tool in establishing meaning. “What does it mean to me?” becomes a key question. The self becomes an important variable in the equation of knowledge again. The redundant patterning of deep structures and the transformations of gestalt wholes, which are clearly part of structuralism and dialectics, is also transformed because the self is seen as part of the whole that is transformed and as being an element in the deep structure. This is an extreme departure as structural and dialectical systems are for the most part seen as objective structures. However, that objectivity depends on intersubjective recognition, which in turn, is a problem. In heuristic research intersubjective connection and relationship through communication is used as a bridge to explore the deep structures where social and mythical deep structures become expressions of the collective unconscious. Heuristic researchers

exploring the same problem domain share notes and experiences in order to refine our appreciation of those deep structures. And in dialectics the transformation of the whole into a new gestalt becomes the inner transformation of the individual as he has realizations in the process of his research. The questioning of the fundamental assumption of distancing produces a transformation in these other methods as they are related to the fifth perspective of heuristic research.

(2) Whereas phenomenology permits the researcher to conclude with definite descriptions of the structures of experience, heuristics leads to depictions of essential meanings and portrayal of the intrigue and personal significance that imbue the search to know.

It is interesting that hermeneutics deals with only outward meaning. By constructing the hermeneutic circle, one attempts to use other things as a means of allowing the meaning of the thing to shine through one's own projections. However, in this very act of constructing the hermeneutic circle the self is left out so a valuable tool is lost. But cleansing the meanings derived through hermeneutics or phenomenology of personal experience in order to get rid of subjectivity is ultimately futile. The self is still there, still warping the results. Why cannot we trust ourselves and use the self to see

beyond the external significations to the real essence of the phenomena under study. Each investigation is a personal adventure. We want to present the results and lose the person who came to those conclusions. Instead we should consider the person integral to the results. They are HIS results. So the question should immediately be: “Who is HE?”

In dialectics and structuralism the structures or dynamics of the whole are seen as patterns that are impersonal. That is the whole point of the exercise, to come up with laws that are independent of the people who were determined by, or themselves determined, those structures. But in the end, because we lose the biographies, we also lose the means of verifying that those structures and dynamics played a part in the lives of the people being described. We are saying that we want universal non-subjective patterns which still determine the lives of people. Yet we throw away the very evidence that this connection actually existed. We throw away that evidence because we do not know what the roles of those forces or patterns are on people’s lives, and we throw it away because we do not allow ourselves to research into what their impact on our own lives are. Distancing produces basic disconnect in human sciences in which the humans are lost. The researcher is forced to exclude himself, and his own feelings and intuitions, from his

findings as if that supplement is unnecessary. In fact, it is by that exclusion that the meaning of the results are lost. And each of us that take up those results must reconstrue that meaning again for ourselves from scratch without knowing what they meant to others.

(3) Whereas phenomenological research generally concludes with a presentation of the distilled structures of experience, heuristics may involve reintegration of derived knowledge that itself is an act of creative discovery, a synthesis that includes intuition and tacit understanding.

Heuristics includes within itself the experience of discovery, creativity, innovation, emergence of meaning. Thus, it does not describe this phenomena from the outside as a phenomenologist would, even though it is happening in his own consciousness. The relation to the source of meaning generation is direct instead of indirect as it is in hermeneutics. In hermeneutics one depends on other things from within the hermeneutic circle to give a clue to the significance of something new. In heuristics one depends on one's direct apprehension of the meaning of the novelty itself. The moment of creativity is often described as a moment of synthesis, but in dialectics that raising to a new level is seen as an external event, not as something one relates to directly from within one's own striving for understanding. In such moments, deep

structural changes may occur as with paradigm shifts. However, from structuralism we get no hint of how those deep structural changes effect the repatterning of consciousness directly. How can we pretend to understand creativity, novelty, newness, emergence in our process philosophy if our own methodology excludes it. So just as the pragmatists place the scientific method at the center of experience, so we must place the experience of creativity at the center of our methodology which will be used to understand creativity.

(4) Whereas phenomenology loses the persons in the process of descriptive analysis, in heuristics the research participants remain visible in the examination of the data and continue to be portrayed as whole persons.

Phenomenology, hermeneutics, dialectics and structuralism all lose the person who is the experiencer. We might cry “back to the experiencer him/her self.” We have gone back to the things and discovered that without the self we ultimately misinterpret what the things are saying to us. Without the self in the hermeneutic circle there is always a break in the spiral that can never be mended. Without the self in the loop dialectics remain something which we are not sure actually ever happens in experience. Without the self the deep structures, no matter how well documented or clearly present, can never

be seen as causal in any sense. They are just interesting patterns that may have no relation to anything anyone ever experiences.

Phenomenology ends with the essence of experience; heuristics retrains the essence of the person in experience<sup>3</sup>.

If phenomenology ends with the essence of experience, and that essence is seen as the persistent structures of consciousness, then we can see that structuralism is the projection of those persistent structures outward. Hermeneutics then can be seen as the opposite of dialectics. In hermeneutics we attempt to move from the forms with content that appears within structured experience toward meanings sustained by the interrelations of those phenomena that are showing themselves. With dialectics one is attempting to move toward a greater synthesis outwardly. The realization of meaning inwardly and the outward synthesis are both projections. One is a projection based on the hermeneutic circle, whereas the other is a projection based on the interrelation of thesis and antithesis. These projections tend to fall back on themselves. In fact, the missing element in all this is the self which was excluded on purpose. The self is the basis for the projection of the synthesis of the dialectic and of the meaning from the

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3. (Douglass and Moustakas 1985 p43)



hermeneutic circle. The self is the one who lives within the structures of consciousness and society in which intersubjective deep structures are propagated. The self is the key element which has been forgotten by the great methods which have driven philosophy in this century. Heuristic research steps into the midst of this fourfold set of methods and gives them sudden life. So it is not a matter of forgetting them, but of adding to them their lost center. Heuristic research provides access to that lost center. It goes full circle and declares that all methods that forget the self are ultimately “non-scientific” because the self cannot ultimately be separated from the object of study. To study means to have a self in action focusing on the object and querying it. No self, no study, so no science. Heuristic research finally gives a complete picture of what science should be. Combined with the other methods which allow distancing, heuristic research gives the missing element that completes the set. Heuristic research is a new method that will allow us to pursue emergent systems process philosophy with new vigor, and hopefully new insights, that have been lacking hitherto because our set of methods was not complete.

Heuristic research, as presented by Clark Moustakas, is really a constellation of related methods for “getting close” to a particular facet of human experience. One lives the experience, and one participates with others

living the experience as well as performing a variety of other research techniques which are secondary to the experience but focused on it. The methods are really just a catalogue of things which have been found to work, and any ethical method may be used which allows one to more fully “get at” the experience. This list includes the following methods:

- Identifying with the focus of inquiry

Here one imagines what it is like to be the thing under investigation.

- Self-dialogue

Here one has a dialogue with oneself about the experience or a imaginary dialogue with the phenomena itself.

- Tacit knowing

Here one allows all one knows but cannot express to come into play in attempting to understand the experience.

- Intuition

Here one uses ones intuition in a directed fashion to understand the focus of investigation.

- Indwelling

Here one concentrates one staying with the experience itself and dwelling in it to understand it.

- Focusing

Here one allows one's unconscious to come into play with the experience.

- **The Internal Frame of Reference**

Here one allows one's personal view of the world to interact with the object.

Likewise heuristic research has several specific phases that one goes through to reach understanding of some experience.

- **Initial Engagement**

Here the question being asked is formulated as precisely as possible.

- **Immersion**

Here one attempts to immerse oneself totally in the experience and attempt to understand it by whatever means possible which is ethically correct.

- **Incubation**

Here one switches away from the focus of research on purpose to allow one's encounter with the experience to gel by making use of the unconscious processes.

- **Illumination**

"The illumination as such is a breakthrough into conscious awareness of qualities and a clustering of qualities into themes inherent in the question"  
(p29)

- **Explication**

In explication one attempts to capture and examine what has been brought to consciousness by the illumination.

- **Creative Synthesis**

In this process one attempts to express as a creative unity the whole of what one has learned about the experience.

- **The Validation of Heuristic Research**

Here one attempts to test one's expression of the experience in the intersubjective context.

It is clear that this research methodology is totally opposed to distancing of the subject of investigation. Here the investigator prizes not his detachment, but instead his total immersion in the focus of his concern. It has been said many times that the “subject” is “subjected” to and subjects the object. Subject is used for both the seeker and what is sought. In scientific investigation both the seeker and the sought are subjugated to the rigors of detachment. In heuristic research these bonds are broken. Instead of distrusting ourselves, we begin to trust ourselves. We allow ourselves to become one with the focus of investigation. Both we and it break the bonds of detachment and subjugation. Instead we become pro-active in our

seeking and attempt to throw ourselves into it fully in order to get the most we can out of the experience. Instead of being thrown, we throw ourselves completely into the focus of our investigation. The word “heuristic” is used because its Greek root means to discover or find. If we throw ourselves into our research completely, then we are most likely to find or discover whatever lies in the inner depths of that experience.

This is, of course, how anyone discovers things. They throw themselves into some question completely until they understand it. That understanding may come from a myriad of directions, but unless you are focused on the problem sufficiently, you would never recognize them when they appeared. Heuristic research is, in fact, what all researchers do in a haphazard fashion already. Everyone who has ever attempted to understand something to any depth knows that this can only be done by throwing oneself completely into it. All the talk about distancing is really a charade which allows us to maintain our illusion of objectivity. It is quite clear that one’s findings, once found, must be presented in such a way that hides the process of discovery. The results are presented as if they were logically deducted. Method, in fact, means “meta-hodos,” or the way after; methods are merely a matter of paving the way for others to follow you. However, science constructs these methods in such

a way to appear as if the subject was distanced from the object of investigation. In fact, if such distancing was in place, one would never discover anything. Thus, the distancing can be treated as a sophistry because everyone knows that total immersion is the only way to discover anything. The distancing is only applied later when the results are presented. Those who are fooled by this trickery and attempt to follow methods to discover things end up never discovering anything and are conveniently sidetracked from the real work of science. As Feyerabend says, in science the only method that works is “anything goes.” This means that distancing is thrown out the window first.

We must be careful not to allow ourselves to be taken in by the sophistry of science and believe that heuristic methods such as those outlined above are in some sense “unscientific.” The scientists do not really know what their own methods are. They just keep trying things until they get some result that they can present. What becomes clear is that there is an essential relation between the methods of distancing and the complementary method of immersion. And taken as a whole, we can see that by adding immersion to the set we transform the methods of distancing. So we need to reconsider each of the distancing methods from the point of view of immersion. And that will give us a new methodological perspective

from which to undertake our philosophical studies.

When heuristic research is added to phenomenology, then the descriptions of consciousness become “my” own consciousness as a historical being. Already with Sartre’s critique of phenomenology through the development of existentialism, this historical grounding of phenomenological studies has been made an issue. Thus, heuristic research merely extends trends that are already under development. However, heuristic research still adds something to phenomenological existentialism by making consciousness pro-active. Phenomenology and existentialism tend to treat consciousness as if it were passive. Instead, heuristic research treats consciousness as in the act of total immersion in an inquiry. The structures of consciousness in the act of discovery may not be the same as those of the passive consciousness of everyday life and existence.

When heuristic research is added to hermeneutics, then one is suddenly allowed to grasp the phenomena as a single unique thing unrelated to the other things in the hermeneutic circle. The uniqueness of the focus of inquiry is allowed to find full expression. We would like to call this uniqueness the “integra.” Just as Husserl discovered eidetic intuition, or the direct perception of essences, regardless of induction or deduction, so here

there is also the direct perception of the unique entity which goes beyond the essence. George Leonard in the Silent Pulse has explored this area in some detail. The perceived thing has a wholeness and a position in the universe all its own. Just as Husserl freed us from thinking every essence must partake in induction or deduction to be related to an idea, so heuristic research frees us from the delusion that there is nothing in a thing beyond its essence that it shares with all things of the same kind. In fact, each thing is imbued with a myriad of specific details that make it unique. Total immersion allows one to become immersed in those details and enters into that realm of specificity completely in order to learn more than can be learned at the level of differentiating kinds. The integra is the whole thing in all its myriad of detail which has a specific place in the universe. The integra expresses that integral nature of the myriad specific details and how they fit into the context of the universe in a specific place. Heuristic research binds together the spiral of the hermeneutic circle and allows the focus of inquiry to speak to us directly in its specificity beyond its relations to other things.

When heuristic research is added to structuralism, then we see what intersubjective constraints really have some effect in our lives. Deep structures, which normally remain unconscious, when focused on, either do or do not



appear. If they do not appear, then they may be neat intellectual ideas but, perhaps, have no impact on experience. Heuristic research uses the unconscious actively to attempt to understand experiences. It uses both the individual unconscious (id) and the collective unconscious in any way it can to get a total picture of the phenomenon. Structural analyses can feed this process, and heuristic research would seek to bring to consciousness as much as possible with respect to the focus of research. In that process if the patterns show some features of deep structural patterning, these would be recognized. However, if the patterning has no effects at all in consciousness, we can easily doubt whether they are of importance at all.

When heuristic research is added to dialectics, then we see that heuristics attempts to experience the synthetic movement of the dialectic. Thus, the dialectic is no longer an external thing but an active process of personal integration in the sense of Jungian psychology. As such, the dialectical dialectics of Sartre and the negative dialectics of Adorno attempt to take round about routes to get at dialectical phenomena; with heuristic research the dialectical phenomena can be brought into play directly. Dialectical synthesis is either experienced directly or not. If not, then they have no place in human affairs. But if creative synthesis happens, then it can be understood

through a living embodiment of the dialectic.

Now this series of methods taken together is the basis for examining the question which Nicholas Rescher set before us of whether it is possible to develop a robust process philosophy. Under the auspices of heuristic research this process becomes our own process. We expect the process philosophy to be presented from the point of view of all four of the distancing methodologies as well. But the center of our work will be to develop a process philosophy that is directly related to our self without distancing. This brings us to the important point of considering ontology. Process philosophy in the past entered into a similar type of distancing, considering processes to be the fundamental entities in some materialist sense. So instead we will establish the distinction between “primary process” which is manifestation and “secondary processes” that appear as vortices within manifestation. Primary process is the subject matter of ontology. Heuristic research demands that I consider that manifestation process in relation to myself. Thus, I will look at the upwelling of manifestation in myself first as the starting point of my research. Then I will use the other distancing methodologies in order to stabilize my own inner work on the issue of upwelling manifestation. Heuristic research must function as a figure on the ground of the

distancing methodologies. They exist in a gestalt. At times the distancing methodologies need to be brought to the fore, and heuristic research becomes part of the background in the gestalt. But in our application of heuristic research it is always part of the methodological equation. In this development of heuristic research it is always grounded in the distancing methods. Thus the self does not become narcissistically the center of attention, but it is always there, and never intentionally excluded.

So in the application of this methodology to the problem of the construction of an emergent systems process philosophy, we will focus on primary process, ie. the process of manifestation. And our fundamental question will be, “How do new things come into existence?” This question will organize all our thoughts about philosophy. Coming into existence is obviously a process. It is, in fact, the process of emergence which was first focused on by G.H. Mead in his key book The Philosophy Of The Present. Things do not come into existence in isolation. The new thing is part of the system that it emerges into and changes. Thus, emergent events are intimately related to the systems they effect and are part of a meta-system which encompasses the evolution of the system under consideration. Thus, new things coming into existence is always both a test of and an illumination of the systemic aspects of things. This

question also is very philosophical because it goes right to the core of our worldview which, unlike many traditional worldviews both past and present, thrives on change. In a recent public television series and book by James Burke called The Day The Universe Changed this aspect of our worldview was explored in detail. We thrive on change, and it defines our character more than any other single aspect of our culture. But there are very few philosophical treatments of how it is possible for new things to come into existence. A process philosophy must treat this question above all others because the process of new things coming into existence is the fundamental process upon which all other processes are based, as all processes must have come into existence at one time or another in order to be in existence to be discovered there as an aspect of the universe.

So in this series of essays the fundamental question will be how new things come into existence. This will be the focus of our heuristic research project. We will apply phenomenological, hermeneutic, dialectical, and structural methods as well. We will relate these through a study in semiotics of the new thing. But fundamentally all these methods will be guided by the core of heuristic research that gives these other methods coherence and a new aspect. Given the availability of this new approach toward phenomena, there is an auspicious beginning to

our project of discovering how new things come into existence because we are applying a new method, and in that method the focus is on discovery and finding. Thus, the methodology and the focus project are in alignment. We are doing what we say, which is a fundamental prerequisite of theorizing from the point of view of reflective theorists<sup>4</sup> who say a theory should always do what it says. Our theoretical approach is to practice heuristic research, which is geared for discovery, in order to approach the phenomena of discovery as an aspect of experience in which I myself am engaged. I want to discover the structures of consciousness that constrain new phenomena; I want to discover the meaning of new phenomena; I want to discover the deep structures that appear in the process of unfolding of all new phenomena; I want to discover the part/whole relationships and how they change in the process of emergence occurring between the system that the emergent event enters and the event itself. But most of all I want to find out what this all means to me. I am an inheritor of my worldview. In that worldview drastic changes are rampant. I am constantly being challenged by these fundamental changes. Each of us are in this position in which I find myself. So that if I, and others, confront this fundamental process of change in our worldview, then perhaps we will find some answers to why things are like this and how it

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4. See THEORIZING by Alan Blum

works, which will allow others to learn to understand and cope with the onslaught of change. What heuristic research posits is that if different groups of us focus in on an aspect of experience and totally immerse ourselves in that experience, then what we discover together will be accessible to others and help them better deal with that aspect of experience.

This research needs to be intersubjective. Science has left the age of the single discoverer. Now scientific papers have many authors. Science has entered the age of group discovery where everyone contributes their own insight and expertise toward a common goal, and no one person, except in rare circumstances, has enough knowledge to do it all by himself. So too, in philosophy, it is group work that is the key to expanding our horizons. It is this realization that keeps heuristic research from being merely subjective. It is fundamentally intersubjective. And this is the new horizon for philosophy, in general, to follow physical science toward a new future where we no longer have philosophy schools, but instead, philosophy groups which ideally have open-ended agendas for working together to produce a common philosophical perspective.

Heuristic research is really just a way of pursuing a quest. Here my quest is (and has been for many years) the

attempt to understand how new things come into existence. Heuristic research gives me a way to work through this problematic in a way that does not distort it any more than it is already distorted by my own self. That is why in this series of working papers the goal is not to achieve any final position that dominates experience but to continue the immersion in experience of newness, or novelty until its depth has been plumbed no matter how far afield that takes us. In exploring, we enter into a new territory not knowing which way to go or what will be found along the way. However, we know that we seek a diagram of our own worldview which is comprehensive and gives us insight into its distortions of what will be called primary process. Once these distortions have been understood and the relation to other key worldviews delineated, then it would be possible to embark on a systematic account like Nicholas Rescher demands of us. To set out now to develop that systematic exposition would assume that we knew the limits of the territory completely. Is it not the territory we have all been living in since the beginning of the metaphysical era? Isn't Emergent Systems Process philosophy just one philosophy among others within the metaphysical era? If the answer is "no," then we must keep searching until we find out how this new philosophy itself emerges to become a system within our Western worldview.

## PRIMARY, SECONDARY AND TERTIARY PROCESS

Primary process is manifestation or presencing of whatever appears. This is distinguished from all secondary processes which appear within manifestation. Manifestation is a maelstrom of emanation within which observer and observed alike are caught. All individual processes are somehow differentiated within this maelstrom of presencing. Primary process has these characteristics:

**Overwhelming:** Every “thing” is caught in presencing and manifestation and is completely caught up in it.

**Intersubjective:** All consciousnesses (of our own and all other species) are caught in the web of presencing. Our awareness of each other is though the medium of manifestation.

**All Embracing:** All phenomena appear through and within manifestation and presencing, whether tied to specific things or not.

**Differentiated:** Presencing of phenomena contains a myriad of differences beyond all reckoning.



**Kindness:** Differences congeal and conspire to reveal natural complexes or kinds of things. It is not in any sense a pure plenum, but a multifarious cornucopia of continually emerging phenomena.

**Aspectival:** Every kind has myriad aspects which interlock with the aspects of other kinds to form a natural landscape which is orientable and navigable with internal and external coherences.

**Unfathomable Depth:** The extent of manifestation is unknowable and unknown. As far as you go within a horizon of exploration, there is always more phenomena revealed.

**Wonderous:** Presencing and manifestation is an epiphany of meanings, intentions, expressions, discoveries, vistas, landscapes, states, sensoriums and various other incredible impacts on our experience which engages us utterly in the process of its unfolding.

Primary process appears before all theoretical distinctions such as between subject/object, self/world, mind/body, idea/matter, idealistic/empirical, etc. We discover ourselves in it before we differentiate ourselves from it. We are lost within it before we find ourselves. Distinguishing ourselves and other things within primary process is an ability that arises from the primary process

itself as one of its own aspects. But eventually we use that aspect to distinguish ourselves from that in which we are immersed. So by continuously distinguishing, we begin to make theoretical and practical distinctions which allow us to build a world and a designated reality to inhabit. By distinguishing, one begins to isolate sub-processes or secondary processes within the primary process. This isolation of secondary processes comes from us using the ability to distinguish we find already differentiated within primary process. Secondary processes have the following characteristics:

**Bounded:** Secondary processes are distinguished from other secondary processes by either fuzzy or sharp lines of demarcation.

**Transforming:** Secondary processes normally perform a transformation which sustains differences between kinds.

**Active:** Secondary processes normally align with aspects in a behavioral confluence. In this way distinct auto-poetic secondary processes form vortices within primary process.

**Hierarchical:** Secondary processes are made up of sub-processes which are in turn made up of lower level sub-sub-processes on down to lower and lower levels of differentiation.

**Autopoietic:** Secondary processes are self-generating, evolving, dynamically self-maintaining nexuses of activities.

**Unreified:** Secondary processes are reified into “things,” “entities,” “objects,” and other matters that are described in terms of nouns which are divorced from their active aspect and which are frozen in the process of manifestation. But secondary processes themselves are not reified and continue to be isolateable but active and evolving.

Secondary processes may be distinguished from tertiary processes which are not autopoietic and have imposed boundaries rather than existing as natural complexes. Tertiary processes have the following characteristics:

**Artificial Boundaries:** Their outlines are imposed instead of self maintained.

**Entropic:** They disperse without constant maintenance.

**Intrinsically Inactive or Set in Motion:** They must be set in motion and guided or remain inactive. Any life they have is not their own, but borrowed from secondary processes.

**Reified:** They come into existence by the process of reification.

**Limited:** Have limited aspects and kinds associated with them.

Distinguishing these three levels of process is possible on the basis of innate capacities within primary process. Distinguishing within each of these levels is also done solely on the basis of capabilities taken over and refined from what is available within primary process. So secondary and tertiary process are embedded within primary process and feed off of its energy and vitality. Primary process forms a ground out of which secondary processes arise as identifiable vortices from which tertiary processes spin off and reify as partial representations of the activity of secondary processes. No representations of primary process are possible. Primary process is too magnificent in both scope and content to be captured except by reference.

Attempts to represent primary process are called “primal scenes.”<sup>5</sup> A primal scene attempts to portray the “always already lost” origins of some secondary process or of all secondary processes. The arising out of the ground of the primary process, or the return to that ground, may be pictured by a primal scene. The primal scene attempts to picture the non-representable nature of the embeddedness of the secondary process in the primary process.

The major example of primary process is the pluriverse in

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5. See PRIMAL SCENES by Ned Lukacher (Cornell U.P. 1986)

which we find ourselves made up of possibly parallel universes along with the intrinsic connection that pluriverse has with our combined consciousnesses. All secondary and tertiary processes are embedded in primary process and ultimately indistinguishable from it. All distinctions from primary processes are tentative and not necessarily defensible. From some perspective the secondary or tertiary processes are still fully embedded and undistinguishable from the primary process.

The major example of a secondary process is a living organism. The living organism is the key example of an active self-generating auto-poetic negentropic vortex within manifestation. As Nicholas Rescher<sup>6</sup> says, our concept of “system” stems almost entirely from the distinguishing of kinds of organisms within our environment which have all the aspects of life and many of the aspects of consciousness in common. The universe can be seen as a secondary phenomenon when viewed as just one within a pluriverse of multiple parallel universes. In this sense each universe is a secondary phenomenon. However, since we only directly experience the nexus of universes in which we exist, those other universes become theoretical. Thus, some secondary processes only appear so from a theoretical viewpoint. The major

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6. See COGNATIVE SYSTEMATIZATION

secondary processes can be distinguished practically as well as theoretically. To the extent a secondary process is not practical, is the same extent that it is still not fully distinguished from its grounding in primary process.

The major example of a tertiary process is all the artificial things that animals, especially, men create and produce. All the artificial aspects of the world we live in are covered by this category of existence. But in nature there are many tertiary phenomena as well, such as bird's nests and woodpecker holes. However, many natural phenomena may be seen as tertiary phenomena; for instance, any phenomenon that is the result of an active process which ceased to be acting upon it. So from this point of view the universe can be seen as a tertiary process in as much as it was produced perhaps by the Big Bang. At our scale of timespace relations the Big Bang is no longer a factor in our perception of natural phenomena. It is for us as if the process of the Big Bang has stopped acting. For instance, a mountain range may have been produced by volcanos, but the volcanos have long since become inactive so that the mountains appear to us divorced of their generating secondary processes. This view of the tertiary is always somewhat arbitrary, depending as do all tertiary distinctions, on arbitrary demarcations.

Emergent Systems Process philosophy is really an attempt to understand secondary processes as they are embedded within primary process. It attempts to eschew the appearances of tertiary process which cover over the appreciation of the role of secondary process. Secondary processes are emergent. Many aspects only apply to some kinds of secondary processes and not others. So life and consciousness are aspects of some secondary processes called organisms. They appear based on a foundation of other types of phenomena with other aspects and bring some novel properties which do not exist at the level of things that can be fully explained in terms of physics and chemistry. Not only do secondary processes have novel aspects, but they themselves appear emergent to the extent that they come into existence and go out of existence with those novel properties. Thus, secondary phenomena all have some sort of surprise factor in the combination of aspects in a particular kind which may reveal new aspects not seen before. Also, since the highest form of secondary process is the organism which conditions all our concepts of what makes up “systems,” then our view of secondary manifestation must include a systems view of things. And since some organisms have consciousness and intelligence, and other intangible characteristics, these two must be factored into our view of secondary processes. However, we must realize that not all

secondary processes have these aspects, and we must not be guilty of projecting these higher level aspects on all kinds of secondary processes. Also, we will not forget that these higher order aspects are only a part of the full panoply of Primary Process. As a philosophy we are attempting to view the middle stage between primary and tertiary process, but without forgetting either of the other types of processes. Primary process forms the context, ground, environment and ecological complex within which all secondary processes appear. Tertiary process is the means we have of making arbitrary distinctions within our own environment and which ultimately allow us to identify secondary processes. Secondary processes are the stable vortices within the primary process that allow us to distinguish things as we ourselves are distinguished within primary process by applying tertiary processes to ourselves.

Primary, secondary and tertiary processes work together to give a complete picture of the field in which we are producing our Emergent Systems Philosophy. Unless they are distinguished, yet kept clearly together because they belong together as the SAME, then we are liable to lose our way before we really begin to create our new systems process philosophy. If we lose the context of primary process, then we will think that a description of independent secondary processes will do. Or worse yet,



we will be satisfied with a description of tertiary processes and their reifications. Many processes philosophies fall into these traps. Instead we must continually see how secondary processes are grounded in manifestation and presencing. We must see how they are reified by tertiary spinoffs. Primary process is elucidated by seeing within it secondary process manifestations. Secondary process is further elucidated by seeing how it is reified by tertiary processes. In each case it is the name for what is the same at all levels. Process implies that there is continual change at all three levels. However, the nature of that change is different. There is the change in presencing and manifestation. There are the emergent changes to secondary processes as they come into and go out of existence. There is the non-radical change of tertiary process which is like regulated flows within channels. Secondary process vortexes form those channels. The channels are like inversion layers within the ocean that separate streams within the water, or like the jet stream in the atmosphere. The difference between primary and secondary process is a difference within primary process itself. This is to say it is a grounded difference, but not an absolute difference, that would separate the phenomena irrevocably from primary process. Tertiary processes are non-grounded differences. This means they are arbitrary and imposed rather than following the contours of what is given.

With regard to our methodology, heuristic research, we can see that it is directed exactly at understanding things through their immersion in primary process. As we immerse ourselves and what we study in primary process, and delve into the boundary between ourselves and the secondary process we are studying we get a dose of complete immersion. All the distancing methods attempt to divorce themselves from primary process in some way. Thus, they are methods that appear at the level of secondary processes in order to study secondary processes. Phenomenology attempts to look at the conscious aspects of our own organism as a framework for seeing other secondary processes. Thus, we as secondary processes are seen as a context for seeing all other secondary processes within the territory mapped out by intentionality. Hermeneutics attempts to discover the meanings of things by a process of comparison and delving into the whole field of related things. Thus, the field of related meaningful secondary processes is seen as the arbiter of all meaning. Dialectics sees the part/whole hierarchical relations between secondary processes as the best means of understanding the process of unfolding of the whole set of secondary processes. Structuralism sees the constraints within the field of secondary processes which underwrite all its transformations as primary. In fact, the characteristics of secondary processes are the starting point for the formulation of all these distancing

methods. Only heuristic research dips into primary process itself where the subject and the object lose their distinguishability in order to come to a deeper understanding of each of the secondary phenomena at the level at which they are indistinguishable.

By placing manifestation at the heart of systems process philosophy, we construct a bridge between process philosophy and critical theory on the one hand, and fundamental ontology on the other. Instead of a philosophy lost in the mires of English and American objectivism, we can draw upon the insights of modern continental philosophy in order to overcome the basic limitations of objectivist process philosophy. We take process philosophy that normally only deals with secondary processes back to its ground in primary process. In so doing we make available the basic structures of manifestation discovered by fundamental ontology for a deeper understanding of process that hitherto was available. We also make available the insights of the critical theorists who through the use of dialectics, rather than phenomenology and hermeneutics, went back to Hegel for the basis of their insights into secondary phenomena. Structuralism existed as a safe haven for those caught in the crossfire between the proponents of fundamental ontology and critical theory. It too has rendered available certain insights that should not be lost

in our attempt to rebuild process philosophy from the ground up. The emergent systems process philosophy arises out of primary process as presencing and manifestation to understand the emergent and systemic aspects of secondary processes. It uses heuristic research as the means of searching within the realm of primary process, and in relation to the distinction between primary and secondary process while it borrows insights from phenomenology, hermeneutics, structuralism, and dialectics for the study of secondary processes in their own right. It uses semiotics as the means of comprehending the import of tertiary processes. Tertiary processes are always signs pointing at secondary processes, and secondary processes, in turn, point toward the primary process. The semiotic of the primary process is always in terms of the construction and adumbration of the primal scene.

## **EMPTINESS**

Now that we have established that primary process is manifestation or presencing, the next step is to advance a fundamental interpretation for primary process. The interpretation is the baseline for all our efforts to explore primary process and to discern the secondary and tertiary processes within it. Here the fundamental interpretation of manifestation and presencing will be that drawn from

Buddhism, which in many ways is the pinnacle of unaided human thought about existence. Buddhism interprets manifestation and presencing as being basically *empty* (*sunyata*). They quickly say that this concept of emptiness is itself empty. It is, thus, a non-concept which in the history of Buddhism came to be further elucidated by the description of manifestation as interpenetrating. To interpenetrate means that every aspect of manifestation contains reflections of all the other aspects of manifestation. A common analogy of this in the Buddhist tradition is the jeweled net of Indra in which every jewel reflects all the other jewels. Another more recent analogy is a hologram in which each part contains a picture of the whole. Manifestation or presencing is seen as Empty, and that emptiness appears in the interpenetration of all parts of manifestation with all other parts of manifestation. Any one part of manifestation has as its content merely a mirroring of all the rest of manifestation from its own location within the whole. It has no content unique to itself, and is thus empty. That emptiness is a receptacle for the impression of the whole on the part. Since each part is really doing exactly the same thing, the whole of manifestation is empty, likewise, and all presencing is merely the local action of interpenetration folding through itself multidimensionally.

There are many interpretations of manifestation. This particular interpretation is chosen as the baseline for our exploration because it is the antidote for the major interpretation projected by our Western worldview on manifestation. That interpretation is that manifestation is Being. This is the interpretation which has been projected on primary process for thousands of years within the Indo-European tradition. The counter interpretation of primary process as emptiness also came out of that tradition as the means of counteracting the dominant interpretation that stresses Being. It is hoped that if we play these two interpretations off each other, we will be able to gain some access to primary process itself beyond the distortions and counter distortions which occur within our worldview.

How we interpret primary process is very important. It colors everything we see. As Heidegger has pointed out, there have been, even within the Western tradition, different interpretations of Being down through the centuries. Each epoch in which Being is interpreted differently gives a different slant on the primary processes that Being claims as its own. Our job here is to break away from all interpretations of primary process. Yet this exercise is performed in a dominant metaphysical tradition which must be directly counteracted in order to have any chance of approaching primary process itself,

rather than merely traditional representations of it. What the Buddha did was realize what the antidote for the dominant interpretation of primary process within the Indo-European tradition was. He constructed the notion of empty emptiness as the opposite of Being. He knew that these two (the highest concept and the highest anti-concept) must cancel with each other. When that cancellation occurs, then the human being can glimpse primary process itself for perhaps an instant, and that glimpse was called enlightenment.

We will not go deeply into Buddhism here. Instead we will take this point of departure in order to understand the nature of the projection of the Western worldview on primary process, and by understanding it, attempt to construct a more robust way of looking at it. All our efforts at gaining a way of approaching primary process will aim at freeing it from all interpretations. The interpretations of primary process cloud the issue and make it difficult to see what it is all about. When we immerse ourselves in primary process completely, as heuristic research bids us, we will have an experience which is bounded by our interpretations of primary process. It may not be able to abandon interpretations completely, but we can attempt to sensitize ourselves to our preconditioned unthinkingly applied interpretations. The concept of Emptiness from Buddhism plays that role

for everyone caught up in the projections of the Western tradition on primary process.

Heuristic research calls on us to throw ourselves completely into whatever subject we are studying. This immersion takes us from the shelter of distancing directly into primary process where we cannot distinguish between ourselves and the subject under investigation, and thus we fully experience it without intermediary. The interpretation of primary process as empty tells us further that both we and the subject under study are empty. That both we and it are interpenetrated, and that this interpenetration extends to everything else in the pluriverse. Thus, where we and the phenomena under study overlap, is a place where everything else is mirrored from the point of view of that aspect of existence. So we are it, and it is us, and the overlap between it and us is defined by its mirroring of everything else which is not either it or us. This is total immersion. Distancing is completely lost. The self is there but is empty. The subject is there but empty as well. The whole pluriverse is there implicitly but completely empty too.

This interpretation throws a wrench in all our expectations that we take from what we are taught by the Western worldview. The Western worldview interprets



primary process as Being. Being has been called by C Garma Chang a subtle clinging to existence. It posits that existence has something in it to hang on to, and that the self has the capability of hanging on to whatever there is to hang on to. From the point of view of Buddhism, the whole metaphysics of the West falls under the rubric of “clinging and craving” which is the source of all suffering. Being is merely a very sophisticated and subtle name for “clinging and craving.” Thus, all predicates which involve Being become suspect as they attribute some sort of non-emptiness either to the subject or object in one way or the other. Buddhism posits that we should give up that interpretation that distorts existence and cease all “clinging and craving.” This allows us to see primary process in a completely new light.

Under this interpretation of primary process as Empty interpenetration, secondary process achieves an interpretation as “Dharma.” Dharma is one of the central concepts of Buddhism. It has multiple meanings:

- 1) The cosmic law, the “great norm,” underlying our world; above all of karmically determined rebirth.
- 2) The teaching of the Buddha, who recognized and formulated this “law;” thus the teaching that expresses the universal truth. . . .

- 3) Norms of behavior and ethical rules.
- 4) Manifestation of reality, of the general state of affairs: thing, phenomenon.
- 5) Mental content, object of thought, idea -- a reflection of a thing in the human mind.
- 6) Term for the so-called factors of existence, which the Hinayana considers the building blocks of the empirical personality and this world.<sup>7</sup>

All these multiple meanings revolve around a similar approach toward understanding primary process in terms of secondary processes. The secondary processes manifest cosmic law; the historical Buddha clarified this law by his teaching. That law applies to the human and the non-human world alike, and thus has ethical implications. The law allows the differentiation of separable phenomenon or things. Those things appear as mental images. The law allows us to discern the building blocks of existence. So the Dharma is positive manifestation of emptiness as differentiated isolatable sub-processes. That manifestation follows laws which are discerned by observing the interrelations between sub-processes and their internal differentiation and development over time.

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7. From THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF EASTERN PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION S. Schuhmacher & G Woerner [editors] (Boston: Shambhala, 1989) pp 87-88

Within the Chinese tradition we may talk instead about the relation of Li to Qi (or Chi). The secondary processes exhibit Chi which are flowing energy formations that may leave a material residue. These flowing energy formations have law-like behavior which is called Li. Because the energy formations behave in a law-like way, they produce patterns which may be laid down as material sediments. So when we look at the grain in wood, we see the residue of the process of growth. That growth exhibited the cosmic principles of organization which caused it to follow a certain pattern which is now visible in the grain. Thus the grain of the wood or patterned residue manifests Li. The other concept which is important in this connection is Shu which means number. Secondary processes are always countable. The countableness is related to their separation as spacetime loci or nexus. Within a particular locus there is a flowing energy formation or dynamic system which exhibits Qi (Chi) or matter-energy transformations. Those matter-energy transformations follow laws which are the Li that cause patterning to occur in particular ways. When the patterning within the dynamic system leaves sediments, these sediments exhibit the nature of the Li as a prior ordering as a posteriori patterning of sediments. Note here that the secondary processes are vessels which are quantitatively differentiable as spacetime loci. That the Qi expresses the qualitative dynamic of energy-matter

within this locus. And that Li expresses the ordering which creates the patterning of the qualitative content. Without the Shu you would not be able to differentiate the locus of secondary process. Without the qualitative differences you would not be able to see the patterns. Without the patterns you would not be able to see the implicit cosmic ordering. Without the implicit cosmic ordering differentiation would be chaotic.

Going back to the Dharma, we see all these different aspects that allow us to identify secondary processes from the Chinese point of view within that single concept. Dharma is the law; it is the manifestation of the secondary processes as countable loci; it is the energy-matter transformations. This conceptual economy of the Dharma, which covers all these aspects and more, has the advantage of showing that these are not ontologically separate aspects of secondary process. One could easily get the idea from the Chinese way of looking at things that Qi, Li and Shu were themselves different phenomena rather than aspects of the same phenomena. By using one word to cover all the aspects of differentiation, the Buddhists avoid this pitfall. This is an important point, for what allows one to identify spacetime loci of secondary processes is the same thing that allows you to see qualitative differences and to discern the cosmic ordering being acted out. Li, Qi and Shu are all aspects

of the same ability to differentiate secondary processes which the Buddhists call Dharma.

The Buddhists treat all phenomena phenomenologically in terms of their manifestation in consciousness. The Chinese traditionally treated all phenomena, whether human or otherwise, as natural. So for both traditions there is no differentiation of how secondary processes are treated along human/non-human lines as we are used to doing in the West. In the West the mind/body separation is primary which implies self/other and other forms of dualism, such as male/(female, barbarian, animal). Dualism always identifies the focus and differentiates that from everything else. Neither the Buddhist nor the Chinese system has this major distortion. For the Chinese everything is a natural phenomena and falls under the same cosmic laws, whether human or not. For the Buddhists everything is a manifestation of the Dharma within consciousness which falls under the same law of rebirth.

Under the interpretation of interpenetration there is a single faculty which allows the differentiation of secondary processes within primary process. That single faculty allows them to be numerically counted and separated in spacetime. It allows the qualitative differentiation of the secondary processes to be

discriminated. It allows the laws behind the patternings of secondary processes to be seen within their dynamic unfolding. Each secondary process is itself empty. Each secondary process is merely a reflection of everything else in the cosmos from its own point of view. The faculty that allows discrimination is itself empty. The discriminator which is using that faculty is also empty.

As far as tertiary process is concerned, it is always interpreted as an illusion. Within the Buddhist tradition this illusion is called Maya:

The continually changing, impermanent phenomenal world of appearances and forms, of illusion or deception, which an unenlightened mind takes as the only reality. The concept of Maya is used in opposition to that of the immutable, essential absolute which is symbolized by the Dharmakaya. The recognition of all Dharmas as Maya is equivalent to the experience of “awakening” and the realization of nirvana.<sup>8</sup>

The Dharmakaya, or Dharma body is the absolute reality with which the Buddha is identified. Maya is the illusion of separation from the Dharma. It takes the manifest

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things as realities themselves, rather than seeing them as manifestations of the Dharma. In the Chinese system of thought the equivalent to the Dharma is the Tao (or Way). In that system everything is a manifestation of the Tao. Seeing things as separate from the Tao is a mistake. Everything comes from and returns to the Tao. But both Tao and Dharma do not manifest within primary process itself. It is only with the differentiation of the secondary processes that the Tao or Dharma become manifest. Because within primary process there is only interpenetration and emptiness, and nothing is differentiated. When secondary processes become manifested then the Dharma or Tao may be apprehended. But the penalty for this ability to apprehend Tao and Dharma is that tertiary or illusory processes appear as the counterpoint to Dharma or Tao. The illusory processes are pure mental constructs with no basis in reality. They are all things which are created as artificial by some secondary process which are only maintained in operation by the attention of that secondary process. However, ultimately tertiary processes are not differentiable from the secondary processes that spawn them and keep them going. Just as ultimately secondary processes cannot maintain their separation from primary process. All levels of process collapse constantly back into primary process. They are embedded in it and never leave it. So from one aspect, tertiary processes, or

illusions, have an aspect of reality. The division of them from reality is itself an illusion. We can see that if a secondary process produces a tertiary process, that the production of that illusion is an aspect of its functioning. So for birds creating nests, the nest is a manifestation of an innate part of its behavior. We do not consider the nest an illusion. But on the other hand, if the secondary process of the bird did not create it, the the pattern of the nest would not appear. As soon as the bird is gone, the nest begins to lose its patterning. The nest is a tertiary process dependent on the secondary process of the bird. For humans and other beings the manifestation of illusions also shows us an aspect of their inner nature. Tertiary processes are all sediments of the operation of secondary processes. Secondary processes are differentiations of primary processes.

There are other possible interpretations of primary processes. One important interpretation is that of the universe as primal undifferentiated organism which is killed and broken up to form the universe. In India Purusha / Prajnapati is a good example. In China there is the mythology of Hun Tun. In the Norse myths there is Yama the giant who is killed and broken up. In all these myths a primal scene is constructed in which an original organism is killed and broken up to form everything in the universe. This primal scene covers over the origin of



differentiated secondary processes from within primary process. In Greek mythology this origin is seen as Chaos from which Gaia or mother earth arose to give rise to Uranus. All these myths cover over and point to the origin of secondary processes from the primary process. The primary process is projected to be an organism as are all the highest order secondary processes. The secondary processes are posited to have arisen from the death and destruction of this original organism.

However, in our interpretation primary process never ceased. It is always there as the background for all secondary processes, just as secondary processes are the backdrop for all tertiary processes. Tertiary processes are embedded in secondary processes as secondary processes are embedded in primary processes. The interpretation of primary process as empty facilitates our understanding how this may be the case. Because all levels of process are empty, they can be embedded in each other without interfering with each other. It also gives us a unique perspective on the interpretations of primary process of the Western worldview as Being or subtle clinging. We will explore the dominant interpretation in depth, but always in the context of our interpretation taken from Buddhism which serves as an antidote to the dominant interpretation.

## **THE KINDNESS OF BEING**

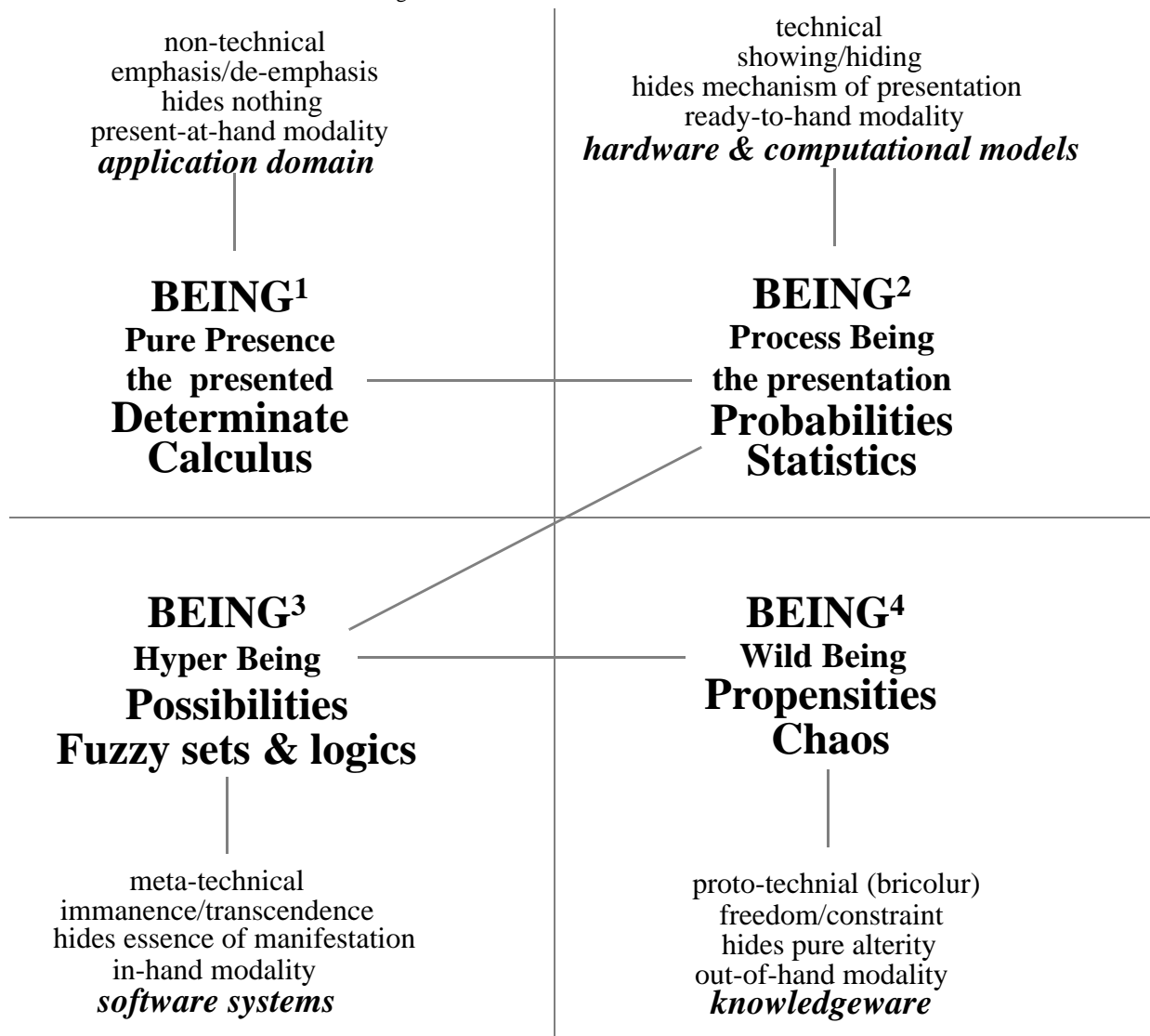
Now that we have some perspective on the relation of Being as an interpretation of primary process to Emptiness as the diametrically opposite interpretation, it is possible to look into the structure of Being itself. This searching within the structure of Being will be the primary work of this series of essays. This is because Emptiness cancels Being -- but in order to understand what this cancellation means, we must understand as much as possible what the structure of Being is, and it turns out that it has a complex structure which will take some effort to unfurl. Until we unfurl it, though, we will have no hope in moving from Being beyond the void to comprehend some other way of looking at existence.

As displayed here, the whole matter with respect to Being is its fourfold structure. This structure will appear again and again throughout these pages. So it is best to get a short synopsis of the structure at this point to prepare the way for the contextual development of these terms. Being, which is an interpretation of presence or manifestation in the Western worldview, has four discrete kinds. The kinds exist as conceptual glosses on the process of manifestation that build one on top of the other. They have been discovered through the course of modern ontology by the major names in continental philosophy since the turn of the century. In presenting them here the only innovation is the presentation of them

as a closed and interrelated system of meta-levels. Otherwise, the kinds of Being themselves are all the figments of the imagination of others.

FIGURE 1

Four Kinds of Being.



**Being¹:** Look at anything around you. Point at it with your hand, and make reference to it in your speech. “This is not a pipe.” You have just entered the modality of Being, or presencing, called the “present-at-hand” by

Heidegger, and up to Husserl almost all philosophers thought of things in this modality. In this modality the object is easily accessible and in clear view. In the case of the pipe, we have focussed on the paradoxical relation of language to the world as shown to us by the famous painting by Magritte. But the paradox itself appears as a contradiction between what the words say and what the picture depicts. The paradox itself has been rendered accessible. The type of Being will be referred to as Pure Presence.

**Being<sup>2</sup>:** Attempt to pick up a pipe and begin smoking it. Here we enter into a completely different modality of relation to the pipe. Immediately we see that the contradiction of the painting has nothing to do with our everyday experience of pipe smoking. That everyday experience in which the pipe, if you are a pipe smoker (I am not), becomes part of one's habits and is only noticed when one cannot get it lit for some reason, is called by Heidegger the ready-to-hand modality of Being. It is a completely different way of relating to things, where they become equipment that support actions and which we do not notice unless our attention is specifically drawn to them. The type of Being is called Process Being. It refers to the way things appear within the stream of action which are not our focus of concentration but are supporting our attentional projects. Process Being is a

meta-level above Pure Presence. The former is mixed with time, whereas the latter is static. Process Being is our way of relating to the world through action. We are beings-in-the-world which Heidegger called Da-Sein, being-there. Heidegger laid out the structure of Dasein in Being And Time. This kind of being is related to by the human being through grasping and use within the stream of action.

**Being<sup>3</sup>:**When we acquire a habit or a new skill, our being-in-the-world expands. This expansion of being-in-the-world might be called the in-hand modality of Being. Through it we take things in hand and attain mastery. This type of Being is called Hyper Being, by Merleau-Ponty. Heidegger called it ~~Being~~ (crossed out). Derrida calls it DifferAnce. It is the cancellation of what Heidegger called being-in-the-world and what Sartre called Nothingness at the center of consciousness. These two formulations are antimonies which cancel each other. All cancellation of nihilistic opposites has this kind of being. When you learn to do something new, acquiring power, knowledge, and other such benefits, one must basically work through this kind of Being. This is because it is this kind of Being that separates all realms within the world. Attaining a new plateau of competence means moving though the area of the unknown by trial and error and practice until the new understanding is

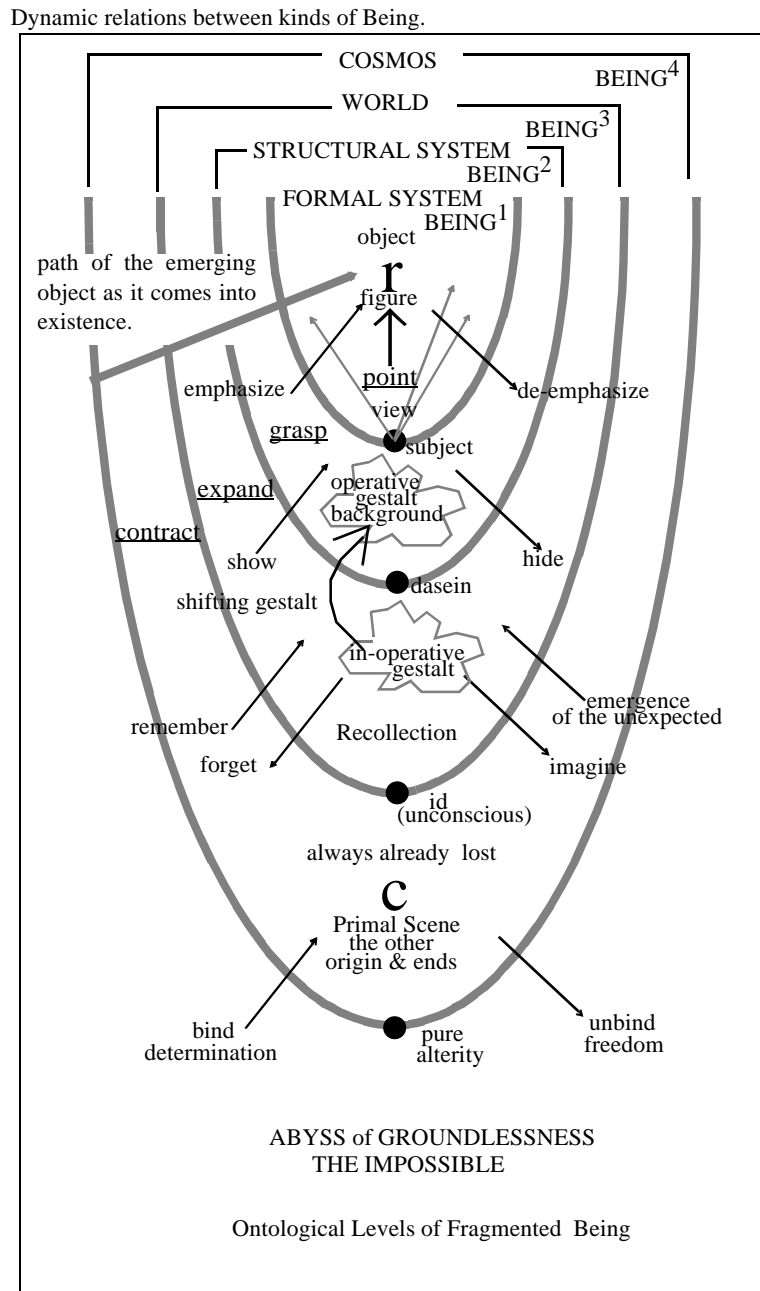
grasped. This type of Being refers to letting go of one thing and grasping something else. There is a moment in which there is nothing in one's grasp. At that moment the old thing and the new thing are both negated. The discontinuity must be leapt over.

**Being<sup>4</sup>:** Finally there is what Merleau-Ponty called Wild Being. It is what is left after the cancellation of being-in-the-world and nothingness or any other antimonies. What is left is the direct non-conceptual perception of the world. It might be called the out-of-hand modality because when one enters it, everything gets out of hand, out of control. It is when leaping between one grasping to another, one loses one's grip completely. This is related to the contraction of being-in-the-world. Whenever being-in-the-world expands, it also contracts in compensation. The contraction is a readjustment in which the changes from the expansion are incorporated within the view of the world of the projector of the world (i.e. Dasein). In Wild Being Dasein realizes that the changes that are happening to him are out of his control. That the world itself is basically out of control because the changes cannot be stopped or easily reversed. When one enters Wild Being, there is a direct confrontation with the worlding of the world which manifests as constant sporadic discontinuous changes. We are always having to let go of one way of looking at the world and having to

grasp another way of viewing it. Our changing views always give us a deeper understanding if for no other reason than they increase our experience of alternative views within the same worldview. But when one orients toward the fact of the onrushing discontinuous changes themselves, then one realizes that for all the increase in mastery the changes bring, there is a more fundamental element of the world which is out of control. We are on a Wild ride and our mastery, will to power, is only a self-induced illusion.

**Being<sup>4+n</sup>:** Wild Being is the last of the meta-levels of Being. Or at least there is a built-in challenge to attempt to *think* another higher meta-level. These four meta-levels comprise the structure of Being within the Western worldview. They are opposed to Emptiness which will in shorthand be called meta-level five of Being. It is, in fact, the antimony of Being with its fourfold structure. To understand the depth of this cancellation, one must have an appreciation of the meaning of the structure of the kinds of Being. This study will attempt to delineate this set of meanings, step by step.

FIGURE 2





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