
FINDING A WAY INWARD

When I went to London to do my studies, I had no real intention of ever getting a degree. I saw this as a golden opportunity to study whatever I pleased for a period of time. It turned out that it was my Shaykh that insisted that I finish my degree. That was the beginning of many troubles. However, from the start I decided to pick the most interesting problem I could think of at the time. For me that was the problematic of “creativity.” If you were to ask what was the good thing at the core of Western development, it would have to be the discovery and innovation by scientists and engineers. My second major for my B.Sc. was in Sociology of Religion, and I decided to attempt to elucidate a “Sociology of Creativity” using the same kinds of concepts used by Peter Berger in his book with Luckmann on the Social Construction Of Reality. This in turn led to a study of philosophy of science; which led to a study of philosophy in general, especially metaphysics and ontology. Attempting to understand creativity provided a fascinating perspective on philosophical thought which philosophers themselves

did not have. To me every philosopher was talking about how new things come into being from their own particular perspective. What I found fascinating was the consistency between philosophers on this point regardless of their disparity of belief concerning other points of contention. To me philosophy appeared as a unified explanation of how Western civilization saw things coming into (and going out of) existence. Philosophies of very different types appeared to mutually elucidate each other when it came to showing how new things appeared.

It appeared that everyone who was anyone in philosophy thought the appearance of generally new things occurred in four distinct phases. I began a list of these sets of four categories from different sources. Every time I found another example I marveled and slowly began to ask myself, "Why four?" And why such apparent agreement on this point when philosophers seemed to disagree on everything else? Of course, this was just my interpretation of their philosophies which granted the apparent unity. Yet this interpretation allowed me to see philosophers as all talking about the same thing from different view points.

Creativity is fundamentally problematic for Western civilization. There is no good explanation for creativity.

It is something which transforms our lives in fundamental ways and which we have come to value highly. A good introduction to Western history from the point of view of inherent change based on creativity is The Day The Universe Changed by James Burke. Most studies of the creativity that results in that inherent kind of change are psychological. The classic study of creativity is by Arthur Koestler, The Act Of Creation. A recent work on the importance of creativity and innovation is The Grace Of Great Things by Robert Grudin. Also Morris Berman discusses the importance of creativity at the end of Coming To Our Senses. Creativity is indeed important to Western Civilization. If we ever lost access to our source of creativity, we would lose the fundamental source of our power and domination of over nature, as well as other cultures. Technological advantage, industrial innovation, scientific discovery are the fundamental fuel of this culture and its claim to fame and glory.

Yet creativity is an elusive quality which is very rare. To philosophers of science it is something which happens in the middle of the night and is totally inexplicable. Yet it allows discovery to occur, keeping science on the great upward track of progress. Attempts to capture creativity and turn it into a controllable element in the “logic of scientific discovery¹” all fail. In the end Feyerabend, in

1. See Karl Popper; Logic of Scientific Discovery

Against Method, throws up his hands and says the only thing which works is “Anything Goes.” You cannot tell in advance which direction creative discovery might come from and where it might take you. Only after the fact can any intelligible statement be made. Methods only exist to help others get where the discoverer already got by a leap of serendipity. Of course, some of these serendipitous jumps to genuinely new concepts cause fundamental shifts in everyone’s thinking. Kuhn called these “Paradigm Shifts” in The Structure Of Scientific Revolutions. When a paradigm shift occurs, everyone sees the world from a different perspective. Knowledge itself changes in some basic way which is totally inexplicable.

It was these discontinuous changes seen in all intellectual traditions which I turned to in my pursuit of a sociology of creativity. I looked at intellectual traditions as structured theoretical systems which periodically were subject to radical transformations called, by G.H. Mead, “Emergence”. G. H. Mead was an American Pragmatist and Sociologist who attempted to reconcile relativity theory and evolutionary biology with sociology. In his book, Mind, Self And Society, he argues along with Durkheim that society is a reality level with its own laws which is of a higher order than behaviorism in psychology popular at the time. He argues for a

“symbolic interactionism” which give mind, self, and society their reality. Anyone who is familiar with Durkheim’s claim that Kant’s “categories” are social will recognize this as yet another attempt to found sociology as a science in its own right. For G. H. Mead the model for this was the other levels of emergent realities where atoms become molecules, become organisms, become societies. Each level of reality has its own unique laws and phenomena. In emergence a genuinely new level of reality comes into existence.

Emergence for G.H. Mead is also a temporal phenomena. As things evolve, there is a point when this new level of reality comes into existence and begins organizing lower levels in new ways. G. H. Mead makes the point that you never can tell when this will happen except as you rewrite history after the fact. Emergence is a genuine novelty distinct from artificial novelty like “fashion” or the generation of “news.” Genuine emergence changes things fundamentally while artificial emergence is just more of the same represented as if it were new.

My premise is that all theoretical structural systems undergo periodic discontinuous changes which alter their structure in fundamental ways. What I sought to explain was why these occur and how. I looked to Western ontology for the answer. Ontology is a branch of

metaphysics that explains the reality of what we know. Epistemology, on the other hand, is the study of how we know what we know. This distinction is rooted in the split between “truth” and “reality” in the Western tradition. I reasoned that ontology should tell me the stages of emergence and how to differentiate genuine from artificial emergence. I found that ontology appeared unified on specifying four distinct phases of emergence, and the difference of genuine emergence was that it went through all four stages whereas artificial emergence did not.

I have always felt that this was an interesting finding which I have not seen elsewhere in the literature I have surveyed. I do not intend to prove this assertion here as I sought to do in my dissertation. Instead, there are other more germane points that need to be made. It implies that change in the form of artificial novelty is continuously being generated in any theoretical structural system. However, occasionally, for no apparent reason a full emergence of genuine novelty occurs which goes through four distinct phases on its entry into the theoretical system and reorganizes the whole system gestalt on a completely new pattern. We rewrite the history of the theoretical system after this reorganization occurs, calling it progress and pointing out how logical and reasonable the progress of the system is over time. Jacques Monod

constructs a picture of evolution along these lines in Chance And Necessity. He calls this type of “purposeful change which doesn’t know where it is going,” *teleonomic*. The system acts as its own filter for mutations within the system. Gradually the possibilities become more and more constrained until a destination is apparent at which time teleology can be imagined for the structural system and projected back on its own history. This teleology holds until the next genuinely emergent event in which case history will have to be rewritten again.

The four steps of genuine emergence, as I decode them, are seen to be something like this:

- 1) There is something out there; but I don’t know what it is. The anomaly is not yet pinpointed; but we know something is wrong.
- 2) Identification of the anomaly as a strange thing with particular characteristics.
- 3) Classification of the anomaly by repatterning the theoretical system.
- 4) Integration of the anomaly into the new pattern of the theoretical system and rewriting of previous history.

Normal science bases its research on generally accepted

paradigms. In the course of pursuing the validation of hypothesis related to an established paradigm, anomalies appear. At first they are assumed to be experimental errors and are discarded. When the error keeps occurring, but contradicts paradigm norms, it is gradually identified as a standard inexplicable anomaly. Gradually it becomes a phenomena with its own characteristics and subject, along with other anomalies, to scrutiny in its own right. As a phenomena it is discovered to have its own peculiar characteristics. As the characteristics of the anomalous phenomena become known, theoreticians begin attempting to repattern the theoretical system in order to explain the anomalous phenomena or otherwise make it disappear. When the old paradigm breaks and a new paradigm gains acceptance, the whole body of normal science is repatterned, forming a new gestalt. The anomalous phenomena becomes just another explained quirk of nature. In the new pattern of normal science other anomalies soon appear and begin building again as a backlog of unexplained phenomena. The new anomalies would never have appeared if the paradigm had not changed.

There is, in this model, a close relation between the creative insight that leads to a paradigm change and the appearance of genuinely new phenomena. You have to be “looking” for something to be able to see it. If you are

not looking for it, you will ignore it even if it is right before your eyes. Feyerabend calls perception “submerged theories.” Perceptions are old theories which we have forgotten were once theories. They filter our experience. Through the filter of these old theories it is difficult to see genuinely new things. Only paradigm changes, which give us new ways of thinking about what we see, allow us to see the new anomalies in spite of our “perceptual theories.” Paradigm change, such as that from Newton to Einstein, is the primary transformer of intellectual traditions. Discovery follows upon the creativity of paradigm change. Not vice versa. Without paradigm change important novel objects would sit unstudied and are actively ignored. Yet there is no explanation of why paradigm changes occur. They are the motive force behind our intellectual tradition, and we have no control over them whatsoever. This is because they are genuinely emergent. They establish a new gestalt patterning within the tradition. They are motivated by some meta-level patterning agent not encompassed by the tradition, but instead perhaps encompassing the tradition itself.

The question is: What is the meta-level patterning agent controlling the development of theoretical structural systems as they evolve through time? In order to understand that, it is first necessary to understand what a

structural theoretical system is. In order to understand that, it is necessary to understand what a formal system is. The best example of a purely formal system is Laws Of Form by G. Spencer Brown. He attempts to formulate the simplest possible purely formal system. Other examples of formal systems are axiomatic logics and various mathematical formalisms such as Category theory and Sets. Geometry is always a good example of a formal system which almost everyone can understand. A formal system begins with a set of axioms and acts as a closed system of deduction starting from those axioms and proceeding by proof to establish theorems. In theorems the theoretical form of the formal system is seen. G. Spencer Brown stops his treatment of his calculus of form at the point where time must be introduced. Formal systems are purely synchronic.

Structural systems are an extension of formal systems that attempt to deal with time and change. Structural systems are diachronic and are designed to describe transformation. The best example of a structural system has been developed by George Klir in his book The Architecture Of Systems Problem Solving. In that book Klir develops a robust model of a structural system in great detail. His model is in the field of General Systems Theory which abstracts from the many specific examples of structural systems found in various fields. Versions of

formal-structural systems have been developed in many particular disciplines as well. Some good examples are the following:

J. Monod: Teleonomic System Chance & Necessity

N. Chomsky: Transformational Grammar Cartesian Linguistics

C. Levi-Strauss: Structuralism The Savage Mind

A. Wilden: Morphogenic Model System & Structure

S. N. Salthe: Basic Triadic System Evolving Hierarchical Systems

B. Fuller: Minimal System Synergetics I & II

J. Piaget: Genetic Structuralism Structuralism

Forms are shapes which contain various contents. Formalisms are only interested in the shape, not in the content contained within the shape. Structuralism, in order to deal with discontinuous changes, becomes interested in the content within the shapes as well. This is because forms break down and transmute when structural barriers are crossed. The structuralist approach is to categorize the different types of contents and work out mappings across discontinuities. What happens generally

is that a formal system will be developed based on a set of axioms. The theorems that flow from these axioms will be worked out, and the area covered by the formal system will grow. Then at a certain point, inexplicably, the field within which the formal system is being worked out will change. The appearance of discontinuous change within the generally continuous process of working out the implications of a formalism is a shock. It calls for us to step outside the formalism. An example of this was the development of non-Euclidean geometry within the field of geometry which until that point was wholly Euclidean in nature. Soon it was realized that the difference was a modification of the axiom concerning parallel lines. Then the two geometries, Euclidean and non-Euclidean, became part of a family of related formal systems. A simple transform was discovered (i.e. changing the parallel axiom) which allowed movement from one sub-formalism to another. The decision to move between sub-formalisms causes fundamental transformations within the field covered by the formalism. The characteristics of objects within the field are also substantially effected (i.e., triangles having more than one hundred and eighty degrees for the sum of their angles).

Looking at the family of formalisms such as in geometry, this effect seems fairly well behaved and understandable.

The problem is that the same effects occur in empirically-based sciences as well. When a discontinuous change occurs in an empirical science, we do not have the luxury of knowing *a priori* the axioms which are operative. Structuralism solves this problem by comparing the forms on either side of the discontinuous change. These forms contain various contents which are categorized. The changes in content across the discontinuity are called structural changes. The mapping between contents of forms across the discontinuity gives us a means of keeping our bearings and even explaining the kinds of changes that are occurring. These methods have been most successfully applied to the understanding of chemical changes using molecular and atomic models. More recently they have been successfully applied to subatomic particles which are explained by Quark models. Deep structural models explain mappings between contents across multiple discontinuities. Structural models are very powerful explanatory devices. They have been developed to a high art in the Twentieth Century and applied to a wide range of phenomena. Understanding change across discontinuities in any field of phenomena has the understanding of structural models as its prerequisite. Structural models are significantly weaker than formal models. Structural models are descriptive of nature instead of predictive like formal models. It is only by reducing the structure to a new

meta-formalism that the predictive element can be retrieved. Thus, it is really the combination of formal and structural models which allows the theorist to gain the highest possible leverage in his attempt to understand dynamical systems. It is the combination called a formal-structural system which goes the longest way from description toward prediction and explanation within the Western sciences.

The ability to map across discontinuities, though, does not explain the discontinuity itself. The ability to predict the outcome of a transformation across a discontinuity does not mean necessarily one knows when the event of transformation itself will occur. The ability to explain transformation through structural or deep structural models does not mean that the discontinuity itself is explained. For all their explanatory, predictive, and descriptive power, formal-structural systems are weak when it comes to understanding what goes on within discontinuous transformations (called by Rene Thom “catastrophes”); or in predicting when catastrophes will occur; or in explaining why catastrophes happen.

It is as if we had concentrated all our effort on what goes into and comes out of catastrophes and constructed theoretical bridges across the ravines. The discontinuity itself remains a mystery. The problem is that these

discontinuities appear not just in phenomena we observe objectively. These discontinuities occur within our own thought processes and externally within the development of our scientific tradition. Kuhn called them “paradigm changes” within the scientific tradition. Within our thought processes they are moments of inspiration and creativity or innovation which give rise to the new paradigm within the mind of the individual scientist. These discontinuities are the points of emergent events within our scientific tradition and within ourselves. At those points our knowledge of the world and thus our perception of the world changes radically. What causes and controls these discontinuities within the history of ideas is still unclear and for the most part unexplored.

Paradigm changes are not the only discontinuities that plague our intellectual tradition. Looking back, these are just one type of discontinuous change that may be observed. Foucault in The Order Of Things sees a broader type of discontinuous change he calls “Episteme” changes. He says that to understand the flow of intellectual history, one must look not at the movers and shakers of our intellectual tradition, but at what he calls the secondary works by lesser lights. These works express what everyone ought to know in a particular intellectual era. When the pattern of concepts that underlie and structure these works change, you know

something truly significant has happened. There can be controversy over the great thinkers' monumental insights. But works which are meant to educate everyone are not meant to be controversial. When these secondary works change, it is worth close scrutiny because the way of perceiving the world by the great body of intellectuals has also changed. Foucault applies these principles of The Archaeology Of Knowledge to unearth the episteme changes that have occurred in our tradition. As one might expect, there could be many paradigm changes within an episteme. An episteme change generally effects many disciplines and occurs more gradually than paradigm changes. In episteme changes the categories used by all disciplines change and are reorganized into a different gestalt. The nature of science itself changes fundamentally. In paradigm changes generally only a single discipline is effected. Yet, as the effects of a paradigm change in one discipline spreads to other disciplines, the cumulative effect could be an episteme change. For instance, the movement from formal models which were predominant in the Nineteenth Century to structuralist models in the Twentieth Century is more like an episteme change than a paradigm change because of its effects on multiple disciplines.

Beyond episteme changes there have been recognized an even longer term type of discontinuous change in our

intellectual tradition. This was conceived by Heidegger as he contemplated the different interpretations for the most general possible concept “Being” throughout our intellectual tradition. Heidegger identifies several “epochs of Being” in which this most general concept was interpreted differently by everyone. This type of change is glacial. An epoch of Being may last hundreds of years and encompass the lives of whole cultures. The interpretation of Being is the way a people gives reality to their world. Everyone could change the categories they use and how they relate within an episteme many times before there was any change in how they constitute their reality. Epochs of Being are equivalent to worldviews (Weltanschauung). Worldviews generally change very slowly, but can be altered overnight as by colonization.

Paradigm changes within Epistemes within Epochs of Being. These are three general levels of discontinuous changes to intellectual traditions such as our own. These discontinuous changes are occurring at different rates effecting wider and wider circles of people within a culture. Exactly how abrupt these types of changes are might be argued; but that these changes exist should not be a point of contention. Change is endemic within our tradition. That change, many times, occurs very fast seems to fit Rene Thom’s model of catastrophes. Other traditions changed at much slower rates than our own. In

the Chinese civilization change occurred very slowly indeed. To individuals in that, or the ancient Egyptian society, it might appear as if nothing essential ever changed. This is very different from our civilization in which a single lifetime sees many changes and in which change is constantly accelerating.

Within the regime of a paradigm there are also many changes. Kubler, in his book The Shape Of Time, explores this history at close range by looking at everyday artifacts. Burger also explores this arena in his book on The Social Construction Of Reality. Within the regime of a paradigm are many competing theories attempting to become the next paradigm. Different factions within a scientific discipline promote these theories. The theories go through fads where greater numbers of scientists adopt a particular theory. Within a theory there are many interpretations which individuals support. The interpretations vie with each other for dominance. Within any small group of scientists who have the same interpretation of the same theory there are also variations of perspective, experience, knowledge, cognitive skills, etc. An individual may switch theories or even switch paradigms at will, and they frequently do. Individual investigators try everything they can think of to solve their problems at hand. They follow Feyerabend's dictum "anything goes" even if

methodologists do not approve. Finding what works is more important than decorum when one's academic life is at stake.

So the real question is what is behind all this change in our culture and intellectual tradition. Why is so much of the change catastrophic so that it appears as if our history is shot through with discontinuous changes at many levels. Whether all these levels have reality is not so important as what causes different degrees of catastrophic changes in history. Some catastrophic changes cause switches from one worldview to another. Other less catastrophic changes leave our worldview intact but change how we structure our knowledge of the world. Some even less catastrophic changes do not effect how we structure knowledge, but only our knowledge within a particular field when a new gestalt pattern emerges in that field. Within a paradigm theories come and go in fads vying with each other to replace all others as the new gestalt explaining satisfactorily all the build-up of anomalies. Each level of catastrophic change creates a new gestalt at its own level. These gestalts snap into place, so it is difficult to think any other way. It is hard to even imagine how people thought during the period when the last most recent gestalt was in force. Our best artifacts are from that period. There may be many transitional texts which explain historically how the new

way of seeing grew out of the old. Yet with all this help it is difficult to go back and inhabit that lost worldview, episteme, or paradigm. Our way of looking at things has changed irrevocably, and despite our many speculations, it is difficult to predict what the next way of seeing things will be like. We inhabit our world, our episteme, our paradigm, our set of favorite theories. They are not extrinsic to us, but intrinsic.

If we are to understand who we are, it is this deep seated generation of catastrophic changes that must be understood. It is the thing which stands out most about our culture and history which is different in extreme from most other known cultures. Whether we interpret the phenomena as good (i.e. creativity, innovation, progress) or bad (obsolescence, confusion, dislocation, decay) is not the point. The point is we must explain our propensity to generate these changes at a faster and even accelerating rate. Whatever it is in us that does this is close to the core of who we are. Understanding who we are is of paramount importance. We are consuming the world's resources at an unprecedented rate. We are moving toward the next catastrophic changes at an accelerated pace, and we do not know what these changes will bring. Knowing who we are is more important now than any time before. All attempts to stop or derail the engine producing this change without understanding its

source of energy are doomed to failure. We cannot control what we do not understand; especially if it is ourselves. Self-understanding is the prerequisite of self-change. Without self-understanding all changes are made in the dark. They play into the hands of our self being, merely fuel for the all consuming drive toward ever deeper changes. Ours is a will to catastrophic change which is an essential ingredient of our will to power.

This ever deeper, ever accelerating change is precisely the powerlessness at the heart of our will to power. We dominate the world, forcing change upon it. But we do not ourselves have control of the rate of change, nor its pervasiveness, nor its timing. Thus, we are enslaved by change more than we dominate through it. The change overwhelms us changing how we constitute reality, how we know, what we know. Change cannot be more pervasive than that. These are not objective changes outside of us. These are revolutionary, radical changes that shoot through us modifying our very essence. These changes act as our Daemon, taking us over periodically so that we must, as Rolo May says in Love & Will, relinquish our will to them and surrender to their overwhelming onslaught.

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