

METHODOLOGY AND DEVELOPMENT:
EPILOGUE

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EPILOGUE

We have now come to the end of the road, with five chapters. The time has come to summarize and draw some conclusions. On the next page the reader will find a table where the structure of the argument is outlined, the effort in the epilogue will be to reach somewhat higher up, reflecting on the structure.

The basic structure is as follows: two alternatives have been presented, one rigid, one flexible. They have been contrasted, some might say caricatured--and if that is the case the author would apologize but plead the necessity of caricature, to some extent, for the purpose of presentation.

Moreover, the contrasts serve a purpose, the purpose of the basic message: both-and, not either-or. Of course, the author's sympathy would tend to be with the flexible alternative, perhaps as a reaction against being trained, perhaps over-trained in the rigid alternative from birth on, in a certain part of the world, in a certain culture, in a certain intellectual tradition and later on as a student with a certain training, disciplining, again in both senses of that word. The rigid has been imparted not only in the author but in many of us, probably in most of the people likely to read this book--the flexible has to be discovered, uncovered. And what is then found is rather simple: the way very many people behave, most people perhaps, when they try to come to grips with the contradiction between the old and rigid, and the new and flexible: they reject one

TABLE 1: Methodology and development: The argument

	A L T E R N A T I V E S		BOTH-AND
	<u>Rigid</u>	<u>Flexible</u>	
EPISTEMOLOGY	Christian Occident Reveal Truth Mediation	Buddhist Orient Create Truth Meditation	* * * *
INTELLECTUAL STYLE	Saxonic Niponic	Teutonic Gallic	* *
WHAT IS?	Surveys Atomism	Dialogues Wholism	* *
WHY IS WHAT IS?	Consistency Deductionism Hard language Technical	Contradiction Dialectics Soft language Essayistic	* * *
HOW SAY WHY WHAT IS?	Verbal Diachronic Mathematics	Pictorial Synchronic Theater	* *

or the other. Consequently, the plea in favor of both—and is a plea in favor of increased richness, not of **de**professionalization of the professional who has been trained only in the rigid alternative. It is an invitation to him to enrich his perspective and competence, for instance by starting out as a young student of social sciences with a course in mathematics and a course in drama, parallel to the work he is going to do in social science "proper". And the same invitation goes to the person cultivating flexibility as defined here: learn some rigor, in addition!

Let us quickly move through the scheme, to capture some of the basic points.

The scheme starts with geography and religion, the origins. Of course the dichotomies in the scheme are much too simple: there is rigidity in flexibility meaning the rigidity of not having to take precise stands, and there is flexibility in the rigidity if for no other reason because rigidity will sooner or later break down. But the basic point stands: on the one hand an orientation towards a world that has already been created by a creator qualitatively totally different from what He created, and on the other hand a world being created all the time, with human beings participating in the creation, and more capable of creative action the deeper their level of immersion in the environment. In christian epistemology an asymptotic convergence to a pre-existing truth; in buddhist epistemology no such thing for two reasons: if reality changes so does truth, and if our search for

truth is a part of reality then our search will also change reality. The total complexity of this much more flexible, and also much more dynamic, relationship can only be apprehended through meditation, not as a truth mediated by those who have seen further.

Why, then, are the empiricist intellectual styles referred to as saxonian and niponic seen as rigid, and the theoretical intellectual styles referred to as teutonic and gallic seen as flexible? Exactly for the reason mentioned: an adherence to that which positively is, as is done in empiricism gives the world as it appears in its empirical manifestation the upper hand. In addition: through data the past talks with a loud voice, the future not yet having yielded data, consequently being quiet. Through theories empirical reality and potential reality become equals; they are both conceivable in a theoretical scheme with sufficient richness. Subsequently, past, present and future also become equals, there is no bias in favor of the past. But having said this it should of course be added that theory formation itself can be rigid and the teutonic style particularly so. This is certainly the case, yet a theory opens for the potential and for the future and data do not.

Some of the same argument can be given in connection with surveys and dialogues. Surveys are frozen, an atomization of social reality, a photo of the state of affairs at the given moment. Of course, several such photos can be taken giving sections of time, but this is not the same as what we can easily

obtain through a dialogue. A dialogue is process, not in the sense that attitudes are observed through time, but in the sense that the very process of attitude creation is a part of the dialogue. We might even go further and say that in the transition from surveys to dialogues people emancipate, from being objects to becoming subjects. Atomism recedes into the background, wholism becomes more possible.

And the same themes can then be found in the field of theory formation. Basic is the discussion of consistency versus contradiction, bringing us back to the origins; a contradiction-free reality created by the creator according to christianity, a contradictory reality including human beings according to buddhism. From an epistemological point of view there is a cost-benefit analysis at work here. Imposing consistency on thought and language deductions--in other words theory formation becomes possible. But there is a price to be paid: reality will have to be sub-divided into atoms, that which presumably cannot be sub-divided further. An atom, then, is that of which something definite can be said, something that either is or is not. Already the circumstance that the atoms of Greek philosophy today are highly sub-divided, in the most dramatic way in human history, tells us something about how fragile this assumption is, and that gives us, of course, the opposite stance, that of dialectics. Reality is assumed to be contradictory, nothing absolute can be predicated of it except that; hence the impossibility of deductive theory

formation. Other thought tools have to be used. The benefit, then, is wholistic reasoning; the cost is theory formation lost. And similarly for those who insist on contradiction-free thought and language: the cost is the loss of wholistic thinking, a subdivision unto the irreconcilable; the benefit is the elegance of theory formation, with its economy of thought.

Out of this comes the distinction between hard and soft languages, and with that the introduction to the discussion of forms of presentation. Verbal presentations as customarily found in intellectual work, in the oral form of lectures and courses and in the written form of articles/chapters and books are diachronic, especially when Indo-European languages are used. Pictorial presentation is synchronic, permitting all kinds of contradictory things to appear in the picture, like in a painting by Salvador Dali which, when expressed in words, would lead to great intellectual difficulties if the speaker or writer tries to capture the totality of the painting, not atomizing the painting into an unstructured set of details. And again the conclusion is both-and: why not try both? Objection: we are not trained that way, some people may be trained in mathematics, some people in theatre, most people in neither one nor the other but possibly something in between. But that is not necessarily an eternally lasting state of affairs!

There is more in the book than what has been mentioned here, but this is the main argument. In chapter 3 the argument is made,

actually in favor of the third column in the table above, that there is something good to say about surveys if the focus is on trying to understand the issue rather than spying on people in the name of science. In addition there is an argument in favor of comparative surveys, based on the finding that national belongingness seems to be one of the strongest factors conditioning attitudes.

In chapter 4 another theme is taken up. If we are interested in theory formation, and the both-and argument would certainly argue that we should, then a focus on basic human needs might be one way of bringing together what segmentation of social science in disciplines, and fragmentation of social scientists in clans and tribes have kept apart. The argument is essentially a plea for wholism, conceiving of Man in Society as a totality to be considered as such, and at the same time a warning against de-humanizing social sciences by slicing reality into the unrecognizable. I would be open to the argument that this might also be rigid, tying theory formation to one particular approach instead of keeping it open, playing skillfully with any set of axioms that might shed some light on empirical and potential reality, wedding oneself to none of them as the single one

In conclusion, let me try to arrive at what at least to the present author is the basic theme, the over-arching conclusion. The theme is this: we have a choice. First of all, we have a choice between the rigid and the flexible. There is no excuse for being chosen by one or the other rather than choosing them, consciously and deliberately. The

objection may be that our civilization, our culture, and certainly our academic structure has preferred one to the other, that there are jobs in the first column and less so in the second column (this is not entirely true). Having a choice is not the same as saying that either alternative will be chosen with the same probability. There will be arguments, long lists of pro and contra for either alternative, for instance of the kind just mentioned. The point about having a choice is consciousness that there is a choice, in other words to be chooser rather than be chosen.

But then, at a higher level, there is another choice which requires a still higher level of consciousness formation. The choice is this: between rigid or flexible on the one hand, and rigid and flexible on the other. Referring back to the table this is the choice between one of the columns "alternatives" on the one hand, and the "both-and" column on the other. There is a clear objection to the second choice: the built-in contradiction. And the answer is already known to the reader of this book: yes, there is a contradiction. But with that contradiction you can live. Let it grow inside you, use it productively. Only two ways of approaching the contradiction should be ruled out: the glib solution by killing one or the other alternative, and the "solution" consisting in doing nothing, just passively accepting the two alternatives without belaboring them further.

Good luck!