

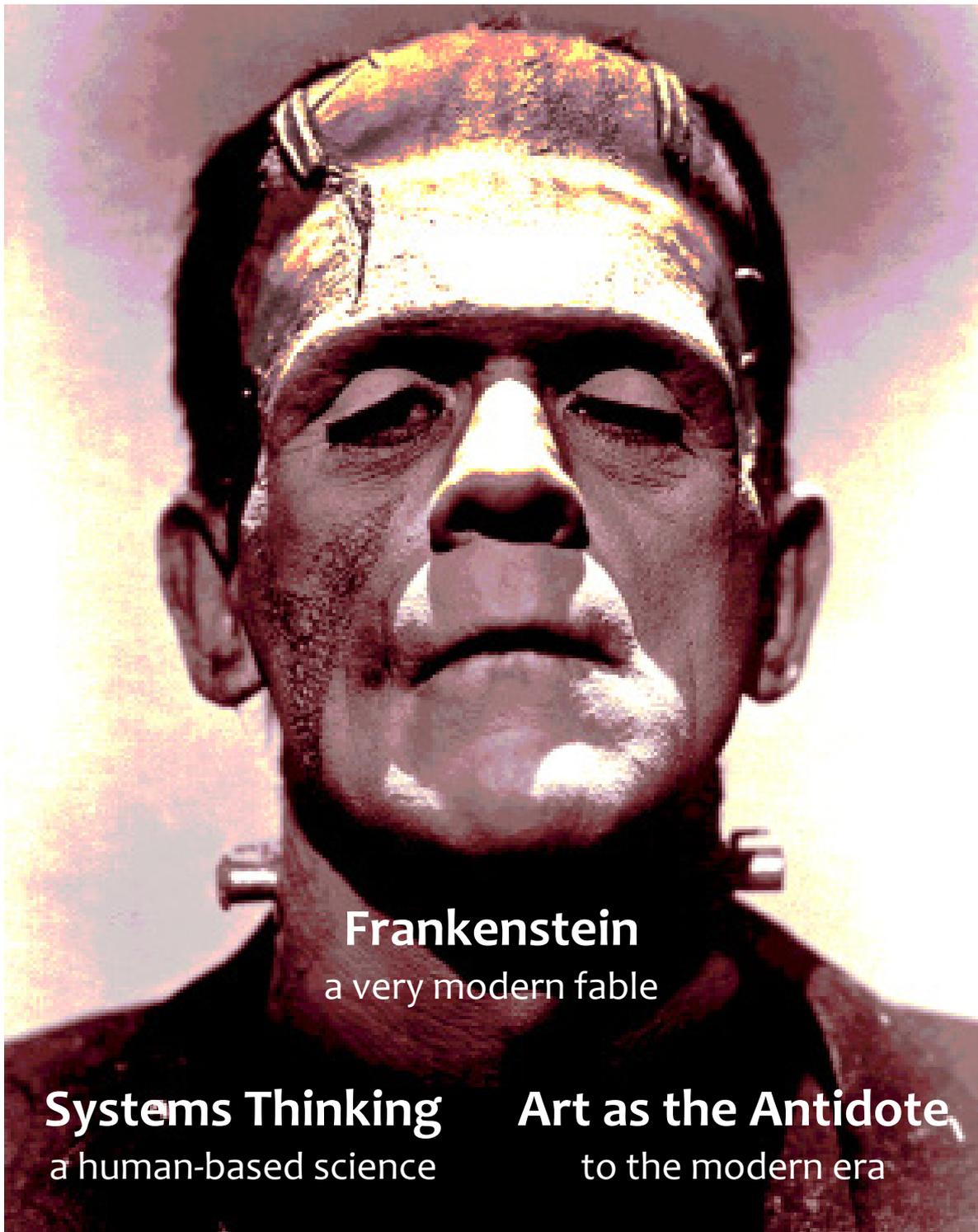
Autumn 2021

NASCENT STATE

Journal of Intuition

Magazine

Human Edition



Frankenstein

a very modern fable

Systems Thinking

a human-based science

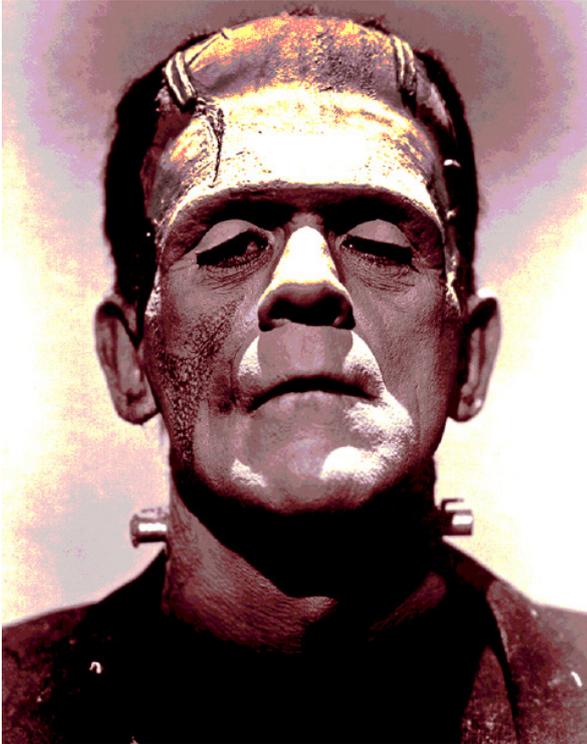
Art as the Antidote

to the modern era

Autumn 2021

NASCENT STATE

Magazine



Boris Karloff in Frankenstein, 1931

From the Editor

What makes us human?

This edition of Nascent State focuses on what makes us most human.

What is published here is merely an indication of the direction of thought necessary to address the question.

The aim is to provoke the reader, not to do their thinking for them.

‘Intuition does not denote something contrary to reason, but something outside the province of reason.’

Carl Jung

The first electrical generator was invented by Michael Faraday less than two hundred years ago; now the widespread loss of electricity would shut down whole cities. Mass transport, mass communication and mass production have created material prosperity unimagined by previous generations, and yet the modern era is equally informed by anxiety, stress and depression. According to NHS figures, the number of antidepressants prescribed for anxiety has doubled in the last ten years.

We are much more than machines, and yet defining what that ‘more’ is can be problematic. In order to develop an understanding of what it is to be human, we must think about not just what is obvious in human nature, but also what is unobvious. Logic can deal with the world we know, but we have to approach the unknown intuitively.

Nascent State magazine is presented in a PDF, free-to-download format; download it and read it at your leisure. For enquiries, contributions and comments:

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Contents

Frankenstein
a very modern fable

Systems Thinking
a human-based science

Art as the Antidote
to the modern era

Autumn 2021

Frankenstein

a very modern fable



‘Now I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds’

Robert Oppenheimer, father of the atomic bomb, after witnessing an atomic explosion in 1945

It was on a rainy and cold summer of 1816, that the young Mary Godwin found herself presented with a challenge. She was staying at a villa on Lake Geneva, in the company of other writers, including Lord Byron, and her future husband Percy Shelley. Byron had invited those present to write a ghost story, and while Byron and Percy were established writers, she was just 18. She struggled. Then one night, retiring to her bed, a vision came to her:

‘I saw the pale student of unhallowed arts kneeling beside the thing he had put together. I saw the hideous phantasm of a man stretched out, and then, on the working of some powerful engine, show signs of life, and stir with an uneasy, half vital motion. Frightful must it be; for supremely frightful would be the effect of any human endeavour to mock the stupendous mechanism of the Creator of the world.’ [1]

The vision led to the novel *Frankenstein* (1818). It became clear to Mary that the tale would be a modern retelling of an old legend - that of Prometheus, the god who brought the gift of making fire to mankind - and so she subtitled her book *The Modern Prometheus*.

The legend of Prometheus is first mentioned in the 8th century BC poem by Hesiod, the *Theogony*, or ‘the birth of the Gods’. Modern scholars focus on comparisons with other, similar myths - the Vedic god Agni, for example - or on the reliability of sources, or on the genealogy of the Titans, and while all of this is understandable, it somehow misses the point. The myth of Prometheus - echoed in the tale of Frankenstein - is a warning to mankind that our ability to affect change is not the same as our ability to foresee its consequences.

Mary Godwin - better known as Mary Shelley - would have been quite familiar with the myth. Her husband Percy’s lyrical drama, *Prometheus Unbound*, and Lord Byron’s poem *Prometheus*, both drew on the same myth, and it clearly held a fascination for the writers gathered at Byron’s villa. Byron himself expressed the meaning in this way:

Thou art a symbol and a sign
To Mortals of their fate and force;
Like thee, Man is in part divine,
A troubled stream from a pure source; [2]

Autumn 2021

The modern era is defined by the growth and influence of technology, and by the desire for personal freedom. In many respects, both are an expression of our unwillingness to take life as it is, and to want to shape it to our own ends. The governing principle of the modern era - progress - is based on the assumption that our ability to affect change will somehow make the world a better place. We would not build rockets or



Lord Byron by Thomas Phillips, 1813

The Romantic Movement, of which Byron, Percy and Mary Shelley were very much a part, arose at the time of the Enlightenment, and was in many respects an emotional response to what they regarded as a very narrow-minded view of progress. Another Romantic, William Blake (1757 - 1827), expressed this discontent in a poem to accompany his painting of Isaac Newton:

‘May God us keep, from single vision and Newton’s sleep.’ [3]

The Enlightenment set out to replace superstition with reason. Its birth-child, the Industrial Revolution, gave us the steam engine, the seed drill, the marine chronometer, the flying shuttle, the spinning jenny, the cotton gin, the thermometer, the diving bell, the lightning rod, the telegraph, the steamship, the submarine, the bicycle, and - not least - the guillotine. The modern era has been informed by the notion of

progress through technology ever since.

We now live in an age of mass communication, mass production, global travel and social media. We believe in progress in a way that people once believed in redemption. And yet progress is very much a mixed bag; the modern era has produced two violent revolutions, two destructive world wars, spyware, drone strikes, and chemical, biological and nuclear weapons. If recent history has taught us anything, it is that technology can be used for destructive and creative ends in equal measure.



Isaac Newton by William Blake, c. 1795

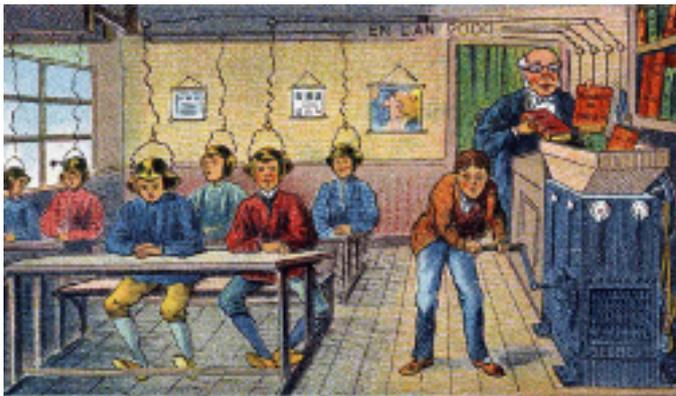
If the progress of the modern era has been a mixed bag, it is not the fault of technology, but of our limited understanding of human nature. In spite of our high regard for reason, it is our inner life which is least subject to rational analysis. Our emotions, for example, are fluid, changing and often contradictory; we can feel hope and fear at the same time, or feel angry at a lover and sympathy for an enemy.

The twin hallmarks of the modern era - the development of technology and the increase in individual freedom - have led to a rate of social change never experienced before. One hundred years ago, H. G. Wells made what he regarded as a bold prediction of the future of aerial flight in his *Outline of History* (1920):

‘In the eighteenth century the distance from London to Edinburgh was an eight days’ journey; in 1918 the British Civil Air Transport Commission reported that the journey from London to Melbourne, halfway round the earth, would probably, in a few years’ time, be accomplished in that same period of eight days.’ [4]

Autumn 2021

The same journey now takes less than a day. While the inventions of the eighteenth century largely affected agriculture, industry and transport, the technology of the modern era impacts on all aspects of everyday life, from microwaved food to genetically altered crops, artificial heating and lighting, twenty-four-hour news, mobile phones, social media, online shopping and gaming, virtual meetings and virtual currencies. Such things are now so commonplace that it is necessary to point out they were not always a part of life.



Jean-Marc Côté, visions of the year 2000, printed in 1899

In terms of individual freedom, we will no longer be told who to marry, whether to marry, what we will or will not believe, what kind of profession we will go into, where or how we will live, what forms of sexuality are acceptable or even what gender we identify with. Many jobs, once regarded as lifetime vocations, are now extinct. Whole offices, once full of clerks who calculated bills and filed reports, now lie empty. The advent of self-driving vehicles will do the same for long-distance lorry drivers. The advent of virtual currencies, almost an inevitability, is one more step away from linking economic value to the direct experience of life. And quite apart from the economy, the advent of social media means that all forms of state and mainstream media are losing their influence over what is deemed newsworthy, and indeed what is deemed trustworthy.

We live in an era unlike any before, where traditional methods and practices - often developed over centuries - no longer apply. The slow development of such practices also gave time for any accompanying wisdom to develop with them. The phrase 'time-tested' means that what survived was what produced a desirable,

long-term outcome. If Frankenstein was intended as a warning of the world to come, we now live in that world. As for the longer-term effects, Friedrich Nietzsche, who died at the end of the nineteenth century, saw this well enough:

'The press, the machine, the railway, the telegraph are premises whose thousand-year conclusion no one has yet dared to draw.' [5]

We now live in a world governed by little more than expediency. The failure to address this means that, like the Victor von Frankenstein of the novel, we will sooner or later come to be haunted by a creation of our own making. Unless we learn to develop wisdom, or the ability to see beyond immediate gain, it is inevitable that we will come to be confronted by that lack of foresight. Norbert Wiener (1894 - 1964), who pioneered robotics, had the following to say about the blind pursuit of technological progress:

'Let us remember that the automatic machine, whatever we think of any feelings it may have or may not have, is the precise economic equivalent of slave labor. Any labor which competes with slave labor must accept the economic conditions of slave labor. It is perfectly clear that this will produce an unemployment situation, in comparison with which the present recession and even the depression of the thirties will seem a pleasant joke.' [6]

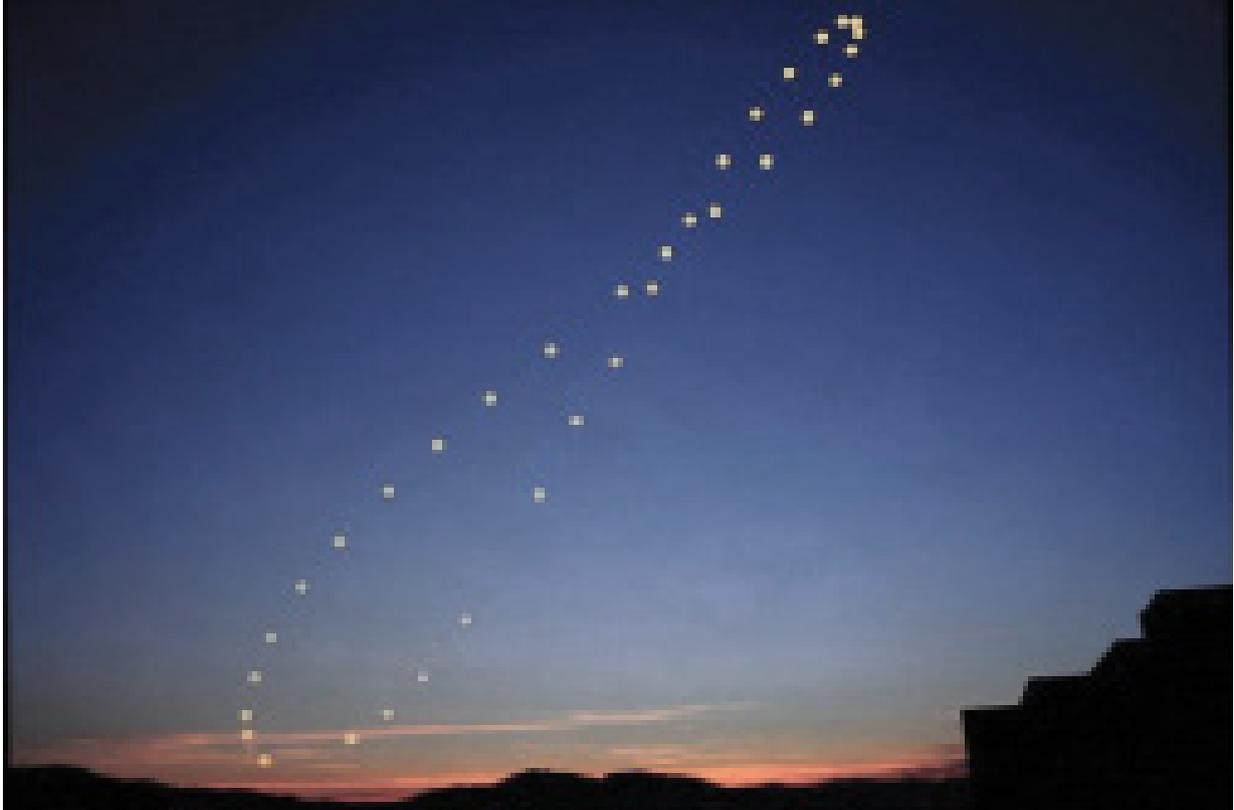
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- [3] William Blake, in a letter to Thomas Butt, 22 November 1802.
- [4] H. G. Wells, *Outline of History* (New York: Macmillan, 1920), Vol II, p. 393.
- [5] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, 1878, (Cambridge: University Press, 1996), maxim 278, p. 378.
- [6] Norbert Wiener, *The Human Use of Human Beings*, 1950 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1954) p. 162

Autumn 2021

Systems Thinking

a human-based science



An Analemma, or the position of the Sun in the sky over the course of a year (image by Astrosurf)

It would be a bold claim to state that a new science is emerging. After all, there are always new developments in science - new discoveries, new research and new hypotheses - and any genuinely new development would have to address issues presently overlooked by conventional thinking, and in a way which will come to shape the thinking of future generations.

The difficulty about making such a claim is that the impact of any such development can only be seen in hindsight. Few people were aware of Nicolaus Copernicus or his book *On the Revolutions of the Celestial Spheres*, at the time of its publication in 1543. Copernicus was the first to state publicly that the earth was in motion, and in doing so, he heralded the advent of present-day science. Any claim for the birth of a new science would have to have an equal impact on our wider conception of the world.

Present day science is heavily biased towards logic. This is a product, not of science, but of the wider culture we live in. Even the transition

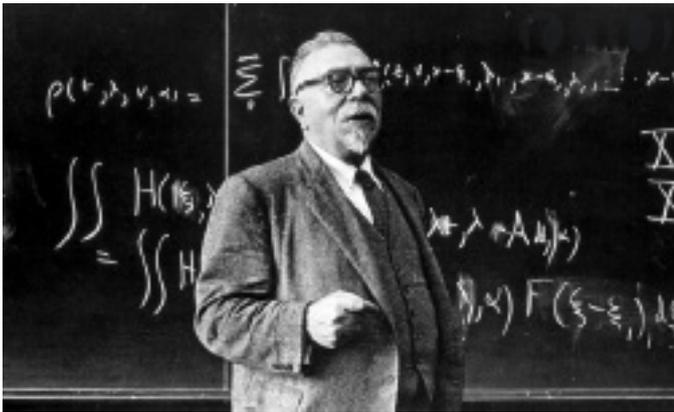
from the age of religion to the age of reason did not result in logic or its limitations being questioned. The Enlightenment thinkers adopted as dogmatic an approach to truth as the Church. As a consequence, unorthodox thinking today is regarded in the same way as it was before the modern era - as a heresy - and science treats its heresies with the same contempt as religion once did.

Logic is by nature reductionist. In order to think logically, we have to convert an experience into a word or term. This works well enough in physics, where iron and copper can be defined in terms of their material properties. However, in the world of organic nature, human nature and society, it is not possible to reduce the observable and inherent complexity down to a specific term without selecting one element over many others.

Any new science, by definition, would have to include what present day science excludes, and what present day science excludes most of all is a non-reductionist view of nature.

Autumn 2021

The name given to this new science is Systems Thinking, and it arose through work done across different disciplines and by people working in apparently unrelated fields. This new, inclusive approach to science began with the Macy Conferences, which were set up in New York in 1941 to promote communication across scientific disciplines; subjects as diverse as hypnotism, behaviourism and cybernetics were discussed. While the conferences were attended by many different scientists, what gave the aim of the conference its practical bent was the participation of Norbert Wiener (1894 - 1964).



Norbert Wiener, 1949

The term 'genius' is often loosely applied, but Wiener displayed a prodigious ability from a very young age. He gained a Bachelor of Arts degree in mathematics at the age of 14, and then studied philosophy at Cornell University, graduating at the age of 17.

Wiener founded the science of Cybernetics, and in doing so, he had to define many processes for which there had previously been little or no definition, including the previously ignored nature of messages and patterns. And in doing so, he laid the foundations for Systems Thinking.

'It is the pattern maintained by this homeostasis, which is the touchstone of our personal identity. Our tissues change as we live: the food we eat and the air we breathe become flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone, and the momentary elements of our flesh and bone pass out of our body every day with our excreta. We are but whirlpools in a river of ever-flowing water. We are not stuff that abides, but patterns that perpetuate themselves.' [1]

The same approach was then taken up by the biologist Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1901 - 1972),

who wrote *General System Theory* (1968), which became the foundation for the systems view of science. Von Bertalanffy's definition of the systems view makes it clear that he was aware of the significance of this development:



Ludwig Von Bertalanffy (1901 - 1972)

'General system theory, therefore, is a general science of 'wholeness' which up until now was considered a vague, hazy, and semi-metaphysical concept.' [2]

What provided the concept of 'wholeness' with a practical application and a workable definition was its foundation in Cybernetics. Von Bertalanffy was fully aware of the connection between his own approach, drawn from biology, and the approach taken by Wiener, drawn from engineering.

'Meanwhile another development had taken place. Norbert Wiener's Cybernetics appeared in 1948, resulting from the then recent developments of computer technology, information theory, and self-regulating machines. It was again one of the coincidences occurring when ideas are in the air that three fundamental contributions appeared at about the same time...' [3]

The other field he was referring to was the emergence of Gestalt psychology, particularly through the work of Max Wertheimer (1880 - 1943), who adopted a 'gestalt' or holistic approach to psychology, and began to outline his ideas from the 1920s onwards. Wertheimer is regarded as one of the founding figures of Gestalt theory. In his essay on Gestalt Theory, he defined the approach this way:

'The fundamental 'formula' of Gestalt theory

Autumn 2021

might be expressed in this way: There are wholes, the behaviour of which is not determined by that of their individual elements, but where the part-processes are themselves determined by the intrinsic nature of the whole.' [4]



Max Wertheimer, (1880 – 1943)

What made the systems approach different from the existing scientific disciplines - quite apart from their inclusive nature - was its focus on the contextual whole that informs the particular. What unified disciplines as diverse as engineering, biology and psychology was the focus on the contextual element and not just the specific elements. The dominance of logic, particularly in science, had meant that contexts, which are fluid, changing and conditional, were overlooked in favour of the reductionist approach which is the natural outcome of the need for fixed and rigid definitions. In Gestalt, the relationship between the specific and the context can be found in the attention to 'figure and ground'. In Cybernetics, the same can be seen in the relationship between the signal and the feedback system. Bertalanffy, writing as a biologist, described this relationship in the following manner:

'Hence the appearance, in all fields of science, of notions like wholeness, holistic, organismic, gestalt, etc., which all signify that, in the last

resort, we must think in terms of systems of elements in mutual interaction.' [5]

It is the attention to contexts which marks out systems thinking from the more conventional, logic-based science. Logic assumes a universal context, in which A must always be A. In complex environments, particularly in human nature, truths are more short-lived; the word 'propaganda' for example, once had a positive connotation - to propagate the Gospels - whereas now it has an entirely negative connotation. The context determines the meaning.

The significance of this development may not be immediately apparent, and yet a whole series of phenomena which were excluded by reductionism may now be included under the broader approach favoured by systems thinking, including morphology (the study of form), the emergence of patterns, autopoiesis (the maintenance of form), group behaviour and identity, perception or the interpretation of events, and paradigm shifts or changes to existing contexts.



Do you see an old woman or a young woman?

Autumn 2021

The shift of emphasis from the particular to the contextual indicates that the new science is, if not born of intuitive thinking, then influenced by it. There is nothing more fundamental than thinking, and the type of thinking we adopt will determine not only the field of study, the way we interpret information, but also the outcome of any research. Logic, being reductionist, cannot deal with contexts, but intuition can.

Intuition picks up on contexts through gut-feeling. Gut-feeling will inform us there is more to the situation than what is presently obvious. That is why an action may be right from a conventional point of view but wrong intuitively. From a logical perspective, contextual thinking is simply the inability to analyse the present situation down to its constituent elements; from an intuitive perspective, a context cannot be reduced to its constituent elements without destroying the very element that makes it a context.

The physicist Fritjof Capra (b. 1939), whose experience of insight altered his assumption that Western science and Eastern mysticism were two incompatible systems of thought, and then went on to write *The Tao of Physics* (1975). Capra found himself drawn to systems thinking as the only discipline inclusive enough to encompass this view of the world. In his book *The Turning Point* (1982), he put it this way:

‘In a broader sense, the holistic view recognizes also that this system is an integral part of larger systems, which implies that the individual organism is in continual interaction with its physical and social environment, that it is constantly affected by the environment but can also act upon it and modify it.’ [6]

With regard to the outcomes of the new science, it is likely that the systems approach will affect all the existing fields of study, from physics to biology to chemistry, and to its application in economics, health and education. Even more, it will give rise to a new worldview, with presently established truths such as mechanical evolution being reappraised.

The emergence of a new paradigm is unlikely to be recognised by conventional science, which will regard the new science as either the subject for mockery or a threat. Nonetheless, systems thinking is a significant new development. Edward de Bono (1933 - 2021), who coined the

term ‘lateral thinking’ to formalise thinking outside the present paradigm, was quite clear about the importance of Norbert Wiener’s contribution to science. In his book *The Greatest Thinkers* (1976) he compared the intellectual leap made by Wiener to that of Copernicus:

‘Wiener’s Copernican revolution was more profound than that of Copernicus, but largely unnoticed outside a small world of mathematicians and system-designers.’ [7]

The systems view, being inclusive in nature, overcomes the exclusive approach demanded by reductionism, which pits nature versus nurture, the individual versus the state, and science versus spirituality. Von Bertalanffy was well aware of this false dichotomy, and issued the following warning if a more holistic approach was not adopted, particularly in the area of the social sciences:

‘Man is not only a political animal; he is, before and above all, an individual. The real values of humanity are not those which it shares with biological entities, the function of an organism or a community of animals, but those which stem from the individual mind. Human society is not a community of ants or termites, governed by inherited instinct and controlled by the laws of the superordinate whole; it is based upon the achievements of the individual and is doomed if the individual is made a cog in the social machine.’ [8]

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- [4] *A Source Book of Gestalt Psychology*, ed W. D. Ellis (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1938), Max Wertheimer, *Gestalt Theory*, P. 2
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- [6] Fritjof Capra, *The Turning Point: Science, Society, and the Rising Culture* (New York: Bantam books, 1982) p. 317
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Autumn 2021

Art as the Antidote

to the modern era



Guernica by Pablo Picasso, 1937, Museo Reina Sofia, Madrid

We live in strange times. While this could be said of any time or age, what makes our own age unique is that never before have we lived so wholly in a world of our own making. In the same way that previous ages lived with the weather, the seasons and harvest times, we now live with artificial foods, microwave ovens, smartphones and exercise machines. We are now so embedded in technology that the widespread loss of electricity would immobilize whole cities.

The modern era is driven by the notion of progress. We have so embraced the notion of progress that it is difficult to imagine that, prior to the modern era, the dominant belief was that of salvation from an unkind and troubled world. When Saint Anselm, writing in the 11th century, said 'Disasters teach us humility', he expressed a view very much at odds with the modern era. It could be said that progress is the modern equivalent of salvation, relying not on God, but on our own ingenuity and labour.

The belief in progress arose at the time of the Enlightenment, which was infused with a strongly atheistic tone through Denis Diderot, Jean le Rond d'Alembert and others, through their *Encyclopédie* (1751), which was intended to replace the Bible as the source of knowledge for society. While there are many who regard the notion of progress as a liberation from the

superstition and ignorance of the past, it carries with it a whole set of assumptions. One of these is that there is no divine being governing the world, and therefore only matter is real. This view of the world is called 'materialism', and since the eighteenth century, it has come to inform all aspects of modern life.

Materialism has come to inform our understanding of the mind, through behaviourism for example, most notably through the work of B. F. Skinner (1904 - 1990). Skinner set out to show that human beings are no more than machines, only just more complex. As he put it in his book *Beyond Freedom and Dignity* (1971):

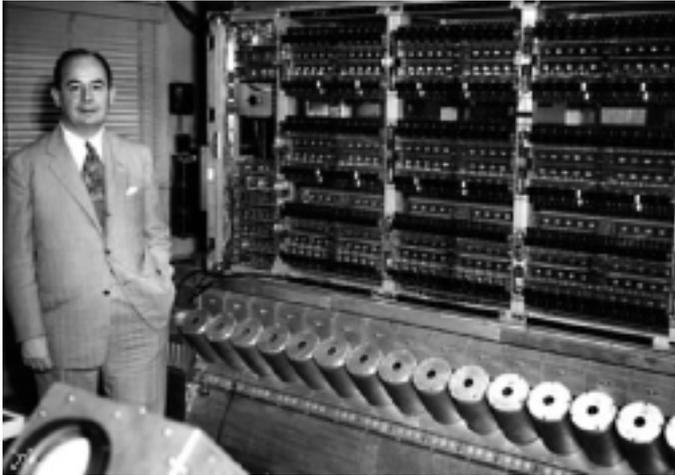
'Man is a machine in the sense that he is a complex system behaving in lawful ways, but the complexity is extraordinary.' [1]



B. F. Skinner in his laboratory, 1963

Autumn 2021

Skinner regarded concepts such as ‘freedom’ and ‘dignity’ as remnants of a bygone era and as barriers to progress, thus preventing us from applying the same thinking to human nature that we have applied so successfully to physics. Skinner’s behaviourism gave rise to modern ‘nudge theory’, and if the term sounds quaint, it is worth noting that both the British and American governments have set up ‘nudge units’ to find ways of controlling human behaviour through social conditioning and positive reinforcement.



John von Neumann and the first digital computer, 1945

A second example of materialism can be found in the work of John von Neumann (1903 - 1957). Von Neumann, a mathematician, saw human behaviour purely in mechanical terms. He gave the world ‘game theory’, which reduced all human behaviour to the level of a game governed by a set of rules. Game theory, and particularly the concept of a ‘zero sum game’, was used by the Pentagon to inform the nuclear arms race, and led to the policy of ‘mutually assured destruction’, which was intended to make nuclear war unwinnable by either side.

But perhaps the greatest influence of materialism in present day life can be found in economics. It was the economist Milton Friedman (1912 - 2006) who gave the world ‘Monetarism’. He saw human beings as no more than producing-consuming machines, and regarded human freedom as the freedom to buy and sell goods. Indeed, he regarded this sole definition as the chief virtue of Monetarism. As he put it:

‘The great virtue of a free-market system is that it does not care what color people are; it does not care what their religion is; it only cares whether they can produce something you want to buy.’ [2]



Milton Friedman, 1980

Friedman’s Monetarism was adopted as an economic policy by Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan in the 80s, and then subsequently by Tony Blair and Bill Clinton in the 90s. This view of economics, where freedom is defined purely in economic terms, is now known as ‘neoliberalism’, and its primary assertion - that human beings are no more than producing-consuming machines - informs everything from education to health and even to the role of government itself.

Materialism reduces our view of human nature down to what can be measured in mechanical terms only, whether it is conditioned reflexes, personal advantage, or profit and loss. Yanis Varoufakis (b. 1961), the Greek ex-finance minister, highlighted the problem with this approach in his book *The Global Minotaur*:

‘Corporations are forced, by competition and by the fear of predators, to try to turn workers into machine-like production units; to make the hiring of a worker no different from the hiring of an electricity generator.’

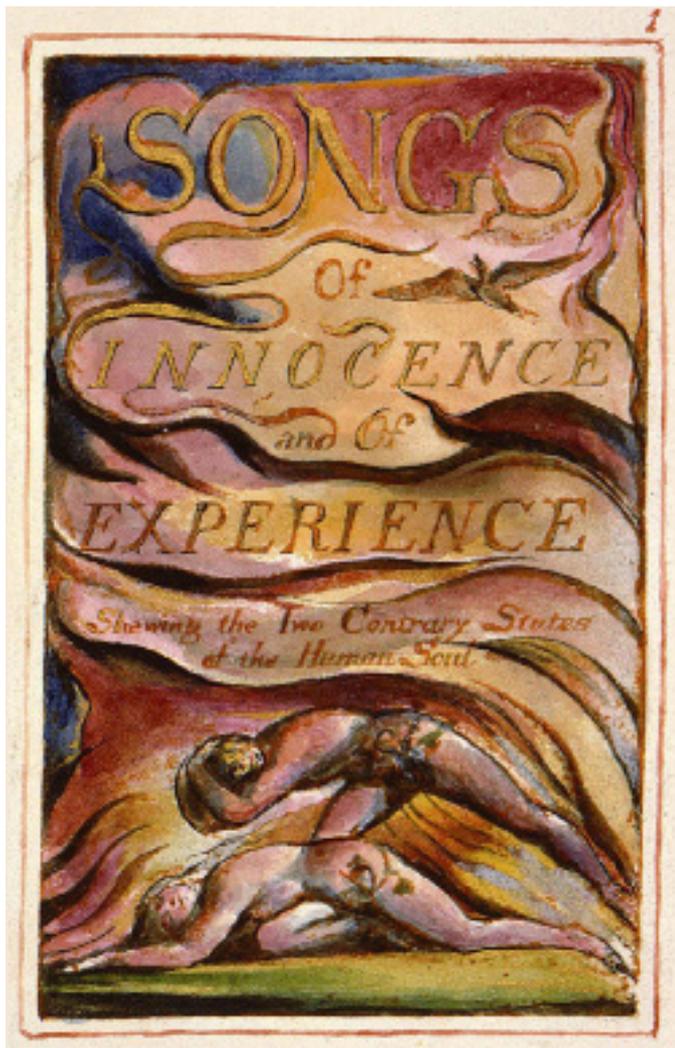


Women factory workers, c. 1920

All the progress of the modern era - the development of technology, the creation of

Autumn 2021

wealth, the mastery of physics, the harnessing of nuclear power, the wonders of digital media and the possibilities of genetic engineering - all of this has come at the cost of a reduced view of what it is to be human. We forget that suggestive selling, mission statements and bonus-related targets were not always part of everyday working life. For those who regard this as no more than a fact of harsh reality, there is little more to consider. And yet there are others who, by virtue of temperament, outlook or fortune, find themselves at odds with this view of life.



William Blake, Songs of Innocence and Experience, 1789

Existing alongside the growth of materialism, a second influence has also informed and shaped the modern era. This second influence can be found in the increasing expression of individualism, whereby we will no longer be told what we will believe or think or do.

The individualism of the modern era arose at the same time as the French Enlightenment, in the form of the Romantic Movement. The Romantic

Movement was in many respects an emotional reaction to the dry reason of the Encyclopédistes. It found expression through William Blake, Lord Byron, Percy and Mary Shelley, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Johann Goethe, all of whom were artists, poets and writers.

Just as materialism embraced progress, so too did the Romantics, but their notion of progress was founded on a much fuller understanding of human nature. It was through the individualism of the Romantics that the Arts lost their Classical form and became increasingly innovative, eventually giving rise to impressionism, surrealism, free verse, beat poetry, jazz music, pop music, contemporary dance and experimental theatre.

At the heart of what came to be known as 'Avant Garde' culture was a determined refusal to conform to any existing norm. If nothing else, its emergence tells us something essential about human nature; we are much more than machines governed by necessity, but are inspired equally by our imagination, our dreams, and hopes and fears. It could be said that Art - in its highest form at least - is an expression of what it is to be human.



The Gift, by Man Ray, 1921

Autumn 2021

Perhaps this explains why so many artists are 'troubled souls'. Leonardo da Vinci's sexuality, Francisco Goya's black moods, Van Gogh's death, Mozart's impetuosity, Schubert's temper, Wagner's egotism, Blake's open marriage and Byron's addiction are all indications that being an 'outsider' is the first requirement of being an artist.



Doris Lessing, Frida Kahlo, Sarah Bernhardt and Sylvia Plath

The artist as a troubled soul is by no means a male condition. Once the Suffragette Movement made it possible for women to express the same artistic licence, the complex personalities of Mary Shelley, Sarah Bernhardt, Sylvia Plath, Frida Kahlo and Doris Lessing all testified to the same human condition. Indeed, there are so many examples of artists who display troubled natures that any list is likely to be hopelessly incomplete; from Terry Gilliam who feared he would become a bomb-throwing terrorist, to the explosive Nina Simone, to John Lennon, who once said:

'Part of me would like to be accepted by all facets of society and not be this loudmouthed lunatic poet/musician. But I cannot be what I am not ... I was the one who all the other boys' parents — including Paul's father — would say, 'Keep away from him.'

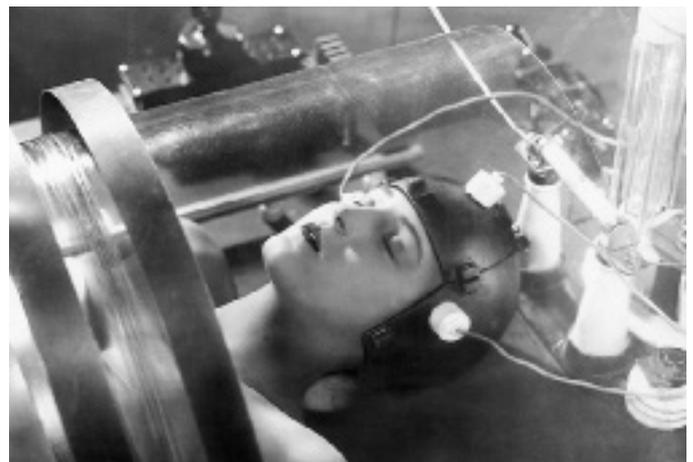
Perhaps the reason why artists display self-expression to this degree is that in all other forms

of human activity - from politics to economics to religion and science - self-expression is an indication of irrationality. The arts however provide an outlet in which to express it.



John Lennon and Yoko Ono; photo, Richard DiLello, 1970

It is creativity which makes human nature something more than an expression of mechanical laws. Machines cannot create, because to create means to question, to doubt, to wonder and to think again; to have the imagination to conceive of what does not exist and above all the audacity to make it exist. It would seem that if the unwillingness to conform is not channelled into artists creativity, it comes out as anger or self-destruction. It could be said that art redeems the rebel.



Fritz Lang's Metropolis, 1927

Which brings us back to the strange times we live in. We no longer just live in the world, we are in the process of creating, making and shaping it according to our thinking. Which means that, in spite of the great advances we have made in technology, the biggest problem facing the modern world is not material, but human, or at

Autumn 2021

least our understanding of what it is to be human. If we allow the modern era to be defined by materialism, we will create a society of producing-consuming machines, in which any human deemed unproductive will come to be regarded as dead weight. Just as mass production devalued the artisan, and canned music devalued the musician, unchecked materialism will devalue the human being.

Without art, the need to assert our individuality would still exist, but it would emerge chaotically and destructively. The need to question and to challenge existing ideas, methods and practices would still be there, but it would emerge politically and violently, as did Socialism, only to become the new order itself.

It is for this reason that the arts are a great deal more than mere entertainment. Art is very means, and perhaps the only means, by which we can gain a fuller understanding of what it is to be human. Materialism will only allow what can be defined, calculated and valued in material terms; and there is much in human nature that cannot be reduced to a formula. So, for all its chaotic mess, amateurishness, bumbling ineptitude, hit and miss imprecision - and occasional brilliance - the arts are perhaps the only means to remind the modern world of what it is to be human. Indeed, other than the arts, it is difficult to see where else this can come from.

Intuition Workshops

Develop:

Stoicism

Balance

Insight

Judgement

Self-awareness

Bath, England

Contact the editor for details

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