

# THE WHOLE: COUNTERFEIT AND AUTHENTIC\*

**Henri Bortoft**

\* Paper read at the Jubilee Conference, April 21st, 1971.

Systematics VOL. 9, No. 2      SEPTEMBER, 1971

*“The whole universe is mad; even the stars do not keep their place” Hassan Lufti Shushud*

This work is the written development of the talk which was given on April 21st, 1971 at the conference on “Developing the Whole Man”, which was the platform for launching the International Academy for Continuous Education. There are three sections to this work, presented as follows:

## **I.      THE PARADIGM**

### **1.1    The optical Hologram**

### **1.2    The Gravitational Universe**

### **1.3    The Hermeneutic Circle**

## **II.     THE IMPARTING OF THE WHOLE**

### **2.1    The Essence of the Whole**

### **2.2    The Presence of the Whole**

## **III.    THE WHOLESOME ENCOUNTER**

### **3.1    The Active Absence**

### **3.2    The Turning Around into the Whole**

### **3.3    The Whole Man**

## **I. THE PARADIGM**

If the theme of “Developing the Whole Man” is to have significance for us, it must have a distinct and unique meaning. Whatever this is, it must be integral. Which means that the meaning of ‘developing’ which is particular to this phrase is mutually dependent upon the meaning of ‘whole man’, within which the meaning of ‘man’ is dependent on the meaning of ‘whole’, and the converse. We shall go through the question “What is the whole?” as a means to sounding out the meaning of “Developing the Whole Man”.

We begin with situations where the whole is inescapable, and which thus can provide paradigms for the whole. We consider: The optical hologram, the gravitational universe, and the hermeneutic circle.

## 1.1 The Optical Hologram

The advent of the laser has made possible the practical development of a radically different kind of photography. The “hologram” is the name given to the special kind of photographic plate which can be produced with the highly coherent light of a laser (i.e. light which holds together and does not disperse—like a pure tone compared to noise). Whereas the ordinary photographic plate records and reproduces a flat image of an illuminated object, the hologram does not record an image of the object being photographed but provides an optical reconstruction of the original object. When the hologram plate itself is illuminated with the coherent light from the laser with which it was produced, the optical effect is exactly as if the original object *were* being observed. What is seen is to all optical appearances the original object itself in full three-dimensional form, being displaced in apparent position when seen from different perspectives (the parallax effect) in the same way as the original object.

A hologram has several remarkable properties, in addition to those related to the three-dimensional nature of the optical reconstruction which it permits. The particular property which is of direct concern here is the pervasiveness of the whole optical object throughout the plate. If the hologram plate is broken into fragments and one fragment is illuminated, then it is found that the same three-dimensional optical reconstruction of the original object is produced. There is nothing missing, the only difference is that the reconstruction is less well-defined. The entire original object can be optically reconstructed from any fragment of the original hologram, but as the fragments get smaller and smaller the resolution deteriorates until the reconstruction becomes so blotchy and ill-defined as to become unrecognizable.

This property of the hologram is in striking contrast to the ordinary image-recording photographic plate. If this type of plate is broken and a fragment illuminated, the image reproduced will be that recorded on the fragment and no more. With orthodox photography the image fragments with the plate; with holography the structure of the reconstruction (but not the clarity of definition) is undivided with the fragments.

## 1.2 The Gravitational Universe

The classical principle of gravitation is an inverse-square law: “Any two masses are in a condition of reciprocal attraction, the magnitude of which varies directly with their product and inversely with the square of their separation.” This means that if the separation is doubled the reciprocal attraction is quartered; if the separation is increased fourfold the reciprocal attraction is diminished by a factor of sixteen, and so on.

The inverse-square law tells us more than is commonly realized. Making certain assumptions, which we do not need to consider here, we find that the gravitational effect on the earth from all matter on a sphere of a given radius about the earth as centre, depends critically on the form of the law of reciprocal attraction. With an inverse-square law the effect does not depend on the radius, that is upon the distance, in any way whatsoever. With an inverse-square law the effect on the earth at the centre of the imagined sphere depends entirely on the magnitude of the mass distributed over the surface of the sphere. Thus we have the remarkable result that, although the magnitude of the reciprocal attraction falls off with the inverse-square of the distance, the net gravitational effect of a sphere of matter on a mass at its centre is

independent of distance altogether. Since distance is in this case irrelevant, only the total mass in the sphere contributing to the gravitational effect, we may contract or expand the sphere as we please and, providing we keep the mass constant, the gravitational effect at the centre will remain constant. So that since, with this provision of constant mass, all distances are equivalent in their irrelevance, it is as if there were no 'gravitational distance' at all. Thus the surface of the sphere is 'gravitationally present' at the centre. But so are all other spheres about the same centre. In the case of the earth at the centre this means that the whole universe is 'gravitationally present' in the earth, gravitationally immanent here now without separation. But my mass can be at such a centre, so that the whole universe is gravitationally immanent everywhere. Everywhere is gravitationally here, and since here is anywhere, then everywhere is gravitationally anywhere and anywhere is everywhere. Thus the universe as a whole is a gravitational hologram, and a new significance is given to mass by suggesting that it is the 'gravitational presence' of the whole universe in a region, in a manner analogous to the way in which the whole picture is 'present' in any region of the optical hologram.

The deeper nature of the inverse-square law is probably obscured by the fact that today it is often thought to be no more than an empirical generalization from observational data. But it is nothing so naive. On the contrary, it is truly cosmological in that it shows a fundamental property of the whole universe. Newton himself knew that gravitational attraction was not a property of matter, and he said so. This is surprising to us, because we think it is just that. Newton warned explicitly against thinking of a physical force like a push, a pull, or an impulse; and he vigorously rejected action-at-a-distance. His pupils took no notice of this counsel, and it was they who shaped what we have come to recognise as "Newtonian Physics". This misadventure of the principle of gravitation was completed and sealed by the development of the concept of the "gravitational field", a concept which was introduced by way of compensation for the difficulties which had arisen from thinking of gravitation as a physical property of matter residing in a force acting at a distance. In view of its origin, in an attempt to cover an unrecognized fall from the essential principle of gravitation through letting go of genuine perception, it is not surprising that the field concept has gone on to generate some infamous absurdities in physics. But there is need for neither field nor action-at-a-distance in the classical sense. Newton was right to hold away from the thought of gravity as a property of matter in the local sense. But this was the best he could do, and it is not surprising that he could give no positive hold for thought when we consider that the features of the inverse-square law which pertain to the whole, which show that gravity is a manifestation of the whole universe, cannot be contained within the framework of analytical mechanism which characterizes classical physics. Gravitation can be understood only in terms of the whole universe; but we do not yet have the language for the whole.

### **1.3 The Hermeneutic Circle**

Let us consider what happens when someone reads a text aloud to others. We consider first the speaking of a text in favour of the silent reading of a text to oneself, because written language lacks the immediate expressive power of the spoken word. Reading silently is not necessarily different, but it is weaker. We may demonstrate this most strikingly by, for example, reading Wordsworth's poem "Michael" silently to ourselves and then listening to the remarkable speaking of it by Basil Bunting.

If a reading aloud is to be meaningful it is not just a matter of repeating the words verbally as they come up in sequence on the page. We all know what the effect of that would be! Successful reading aloud is not just a matter of saying the words. Successful reading aloud is an act of interpretation. But we must not think of interpretation in the degenerate subjective sense. True interpretation is actively receptive, not assertive in the sense of dominating what is read. True interpretation does not force the text into the mould of the reader's personality, into the requirements of his previous knowledge; it conveys the meaning of the text 'conveys' in the sense of 'passes through', or 'goes between'. This is why the speaker can convey more than he himself realizes.

Authentic interpretation, and hence successful reading aloud, imparts meaning. But what, or where, is this meaning? We often say "I see" when we wish to indicate that we have 'grasped' something, but if we try to look at what we imagine is in our grasp we find ourselves empty-handed. It doesn't take much experimentation here to realize that meaning cannot be grasped like an object. The meaning of the text which is read must have something to do with the whole text. But what is this? Put like (his it usually means all of the text, taken all together). But this is no more than all the words taken together, added up into a totality. Such a totality could well be no more than a verbal lump rather than a meaningful whole, and it wouldn't matter how the text were read, the meaning would be the same because interpretation would be no more than reproduction, so that reading would be just like playing a gramophone record. Furthermore, if the meaning of the text were its summative totality, we would somehow have to grasp this totality in order to understand the meaning. Well, if this were the case how would we ever manage to read a whole book!

But the meaning of a text must have something to do with the whole text. What we are coming to here is the fundamental distinction between whole and totality. As we shall come to see, what we can say is that the meaning is the whole of the text, but that this whole is not the same as the totality of the text. That there is a difference between the whole; and the totality is clearly demonstrated by the evident fact that we do not need the totality of the text in order to understand its meaning. We do not have the totality of the text when we listen to its reading. But we do not have to store-up what is heard of the text until it is all collected together, whereupon we suddenly see the meaning all at once in an instant. On the contrary, the meaning of the text is discerned and disclosed, permitted and enabled to come forth, with progressive immanence throughout the listening to the text. Also, there are many practical situations where it is common to have only fragments of the totality of a "text"—scholars concerned with interpreting ancient inscriptions, molecular biologists concerned with cracking codes, historians concerned with the elucidation of manuscripts, palaeontologists struggling with a few bones, all of these and many others customarily work with incomplete "texts". Yet it is perfectly possible, though by no means easy, for these people and others to bring forth meaning from the object of their concern.

We can begin to see how remarkably similar the meaning structure of a text is to the optical form of the hologram. The similarity is particularly striking in the case of the partial text from which it is possible for the meaning which is the whole of the text, the whole meaning, to come forth. Also, the way in which with progressive fragmentation the whole becomes distorted and subject to confusion is a very familiar phenomenon in textual interpretation. But

most important of all, the similarity shows us how the whole is not just the totality, and in so doing shows us the sense in which the meaning of the text is the whole.

The totality of the text can be compared to the pattern of marks on the hologram plate. But the meaning of the text must be compared to the whole picture which can be reconstructed from the hologram plate. This is the sense in which the meaning of the text is the whole text. The whole is not the totality; but the whole emerges most fully and completely through the totality. Thus we can say that meaning is hologrammatical. The whole text is present throughout all of the text, so that it is present in any region of the text. It is the presence of the whole in any region of the text which constitutes the meaning of that region of the text.

The hologram plate is produced with the highly coherent light of the laser, which is light that keeps single inasmuch as it holds together without dispersion. What is the equivalent for the production of a text? A text which is whole is articulated in understanding. It is through understanding that meaning is imparted, for it is understanding which lets the whole come to presence in parts. To be quite clear about this: understanding is 'the letting the whole come to be present', and the whole is 'let to be present' through im-part-ation. So understanding must be compared with the coherent light of the laser. But it is the coherence which is important. Light, as such, is not sufficient. Ordinary light is noise compared to the pure tone of the laser, although it produces excellent photographs. But the photographs produced with incoherent light are no more than summa- tive totalities of independent regions. So it is with understanding, the degree of which corresponds to the degree of coherence of the light. What is ordinarily called "thinking" does not let the whole come to be present. On the contrary, it loses the whole which it further obscures by setting up pale counterfeits. It gives us a complex totality. This explains why so few texts are holograms (hologram = 'writes the whole'). Compare an authentic poem, or an authentic work of philosophy, or a parable, with a pulp novel on a bookstand, or with many of the so-called serious works which are put together for the sake of food for the publishing industry.

As the hologram plate is produced with coherent light, so is the picture reconstructed with the same coherent light. Similarly, as the text is written in understanding, so the meaning which is the whole can be disclosed in interpretation only by understanding. Thus understanding in interpretation is the coming to stand under the whole in the parts, a 'letting the whole come to stand' which is reciprocal to the original impartation.

Texts can be on different scales, and any one text can include texts on different scales within itself. Thus a complete work, a chapter, a paragraph, and a sentence are all texts on different scales. If a complete work is a whole it will incorporate these textual scales within itself hologrammatically with respect to one another. Thus the whole sentence is imparted through the words, the whole paragraph is imparted through the sentences, and so on. The meaning which is the whole work is im-part-ed on different scales, so that the whole is structurally present throughout the text. In some cases a corpus of several works may in itself constitute a whole text. With such a text the whole is present within each work. Plato's dialogues provide a remarkable illustration of such an impartation.

What we have given here, in our brief study of the interpretation of texts, constitutes a resolution of the paradox of the hermeneutic circle. This figure has been central to the study

of the interpretation of texts, for it has been recognized clearly since Schleiermacher that the understanding of meaning seems paradoxical. Thus, in order to read meaningfully it is necessary to understand in advance what will be said, and yet this understanding can come only from the reading. Similarly, it is necessary to understand in order to express, yet understanding comes only through expression. More specifically, we must grasp the words to express the sentence, but the way of saying the words comes from the sentence. Put this way it appears paradoxical that we should ever be able to speak, read or write meaningfully. Put generally, the paradox of the hermeneutic circle is that to understand the whole we must understand the parts, but to understand the parts we must understand the whole.

This paradox arises from a tacit assumption of linearity—from whole to part, or from part to whole—which is in contradiction with the form of the whole. This assumption comes out of the analytical form of description, and is in effect a prejudgement on the nature of the whole. Thus we unwittingly proceed as if we knew already the relation between whole and parts, and in fact we imply that the whole is just like another part. But the true value of the paradox is that it calls us to drop this assumption and to enter origin-ally into the question of the whole.

We have done this, and we have found the principle of the hologram to show us how to think the whole. When we see that the whole is present in its parts, we begin to move away from our habit of linearity and the paradox dissolves. When we grasp that meaning is hologrammatical, we have no further need for supposed ‘dialectical leaps’ from part to whole, nor to introduce a pre-understanding as a prior context for understanding, or any of the other logical tricks which have been introduced to support linearity tacitly whilst explicitly proclaiming to avoid it.

## **II. THE IMPARTING OF THE WHOLE**

We have used three distinct cases to build up a paradigm of the whole. The paradigm is the hologram. We started with the optical hologram, which is where the term was introduced originally. Because of its practical simplicity and strikingly immediate demonstration of the ubiquity of the whole, we can look upon this as the basic paradigm, and approach the other cases as illustrations which it illuminates. Certainly there is good justification for this, since we often developed the other two cases by direct comparison with the optical hologram. But in fact each case stands on its own, and the apparent paradigmatic priority of the optical case is purely contingent. The fundamental paradigm is the form of the hologram, and we shall now try to bring forth clearly just what this is by reflecting on the cases we have so far discussed.

### **2.1 The Essence of the Whole**

The hologram says that the essence of the whole is that it is whole. This is what it tells us immediately: the whole is whole. If we had begun our discussion of the whole with the statement that the whole is whole, it would have seemed to be either trivially pedantic, so obvious as to be not worth mentioning, or just plain vacuous. But the optical case shows us immediately that this statement, far from being a trivial tautology, is saying the primacy of the whole. It says the primacy of the whole which can be seen by breaking the hologram plate. It says that the whole is ontologically distinct; it is a fundamental state which is uniquely itself

and single in its own nature. From itself it cannot be conceived as being dependent upon anything other than what it itself is.

The essential irreducibility of the whole is such that it would seem inconceivable at first that there could be any sense in which the whole could be said to have parts. This inconceivability arises in some degree from the strength of the statement that the whole is whole; but it also arises from an unnoticed preconception of the relation between parts and whole, a preconception which is such as to deny effectively the primacy of the whole. We are accustomed to thinking of going from parts to whole in some sort of summative manner. We think of developing the whole, even of making the whole, on the practical basis of putting parts together, making them fit, plugging gaps, balancing and stabilizing, and so on. Thus we see the whole as developing by 'integration of parts'. But this way of thinking places the whole secondary to the parts, though usually we do not notice this. It places the whole secondary because taken by itself it necessarily implies that the whole comes after the parts. It implies a linear sequence: first the parts, and then the whole. Thus it implies that the whole always comes later, later than its parts.

Faced with the primacy of the whole, as manifested by the optical hologram, we may want to reverse the direction of this way of thinking of the whole. This we would do if we thought of the parts as being determined by the whole, defined by it, and so subservient to the whole. Indeed, just such an approach has been common for some time in the study of industrial organizations. But this is not the true primacy of the whole. It puts the whole in the position of a false transcendental which would come earlier than the parts, and so would leave no place for authentic parts. Parts are essentially redundant in this approach to the whole, their role being no more than a useless pretence to an autocratic whole that is statically frozen in the vice of its own self-determined authority. When there is no true place for parts there can be no question of development.

Inasmuch as the whole is whole it is neither earlier nor later. To say that the whole is not later than the parts is not to say that we do not put parts together. Of course we do—consider the action of writing, for example. But the fact that we often put parts together does not mean that in so doing we put the whole together. Similarly, to say that the whole is not earlier than the parts is not to deny the primacy of the whole. The primacy of the whole is in that it is a unique ontological state. So to assert the primacy of the whole is not to maintain that it is dominant in the sense of having an external superiority over the parts.

We can see the limitation of these two extremes with regard to the whole if we look at the action of writing. We put marks for words together on a page by the movement of the pen to try to say something. What is said is not the resultant sum of the marks, nor of the words which they indicate. What is said is not produced automatically by the words adding together as they come. But equally, we do not have what is said fixed and finished in front of us before it is written. We do not simply copy what is already said. We all know the familiar experience of having the sense that we understand something and then finding that it has slipped away when we try to say it. We seem to understand already before saying, but are empty. What is brought into expression is not ready-made outside of the expression. But neither is expression an invention from a vacuum.

The art of saying is in finding the 'right parts'. The success or otherwise of saying, and hence of writing, turns upon the ability to recognize what is a part and what is not. But a part is a part only inasmuch as it serves to let the whole come forth, which is to let the meaning emerge. A part is only a part according to the emergence of the whole which it serves; otherwise it is mere noise, and hence lost. But the whole does not dominate, for the whole cannot emerge without the parts. The hazard of emergence is such that the whole depends on the parts to be able to come forth, and the parts depend on the coming forth of the whole to be significant instead of waste. Thus the recognition of a part is possible only through the coming to presence of the whole. This is always so. It is particularly discernible in authentic writing, where something is to come to expression. It is equally discernible in authentic reading and listening, where something is to come to be understood.

We cannot separate part and whole into disjoint positions, for they are not a two-fold as in common arithmetic. The arithmetic of the whole is not numerical. We do not have part and whole—though the number category of ordinary language will always make it seem so. To separate part and whole into a two-fold is to fall into sidedness, and thus to appear to have an alternative of moving in a single direction, either from part to whole or from whole to part. If we start from this position we must at least insist on moving in both directions at once, so that we have neither the resultant whole as a sum nor the transcendental whole as a dominant, but the emergent whole which comes forth into its right parts. The character of emergence is the unfolding within of enfolding, so that the parts are the place of the whole where it bodies forth into presence. The whole imparts itself; it is accomplished through the parts it fulfills.

## 2.2 The Presence of the Whole

It is so striking to see how the whole picture can come forth from any fragment of the optical hologram, as compared with an ordinary photographic plate, that it is worthwhile attempting a diagrammatic representation.\* Let us compare figuratively the fractioning of a hologram and a photographic plate, taking as the subject the simple form of an annulus.



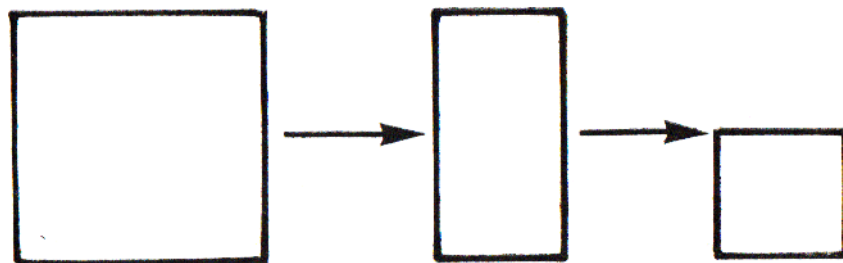
\* Excellent photographs are to be found in the *Scientific American* article "Photography by Laser" by Leith and Upatnicks, June, 1965



For convenience we suppose that the fractioning of the respective plates is into successive halves,



and we will consider only two such fractions.



In the case of the hologram, the whole annulus can be optically reconstructed from each of these fractions, but the reconstruction will be less well-defined with each successive fraction. We may represent this figuratively



But in the case of the ordinary photograph, each fraction will reproduce only the corresponding portion of the annulus, without any immediate deterioration in definition.



We break up the hologram plate into linear fractions, but we do not break the whole. The whole is present in each fraction, but its presence diminishes as the fractioning proceeds. Starting from the other end, with many fractions, we could put the fractions together to build up the totality. As we did so the whole would emerge; it would come forth, or body forth, more fully as we approached the totality. But we would not be building up the whole, not in

the way in which we would be building up the totality. The whole is already present, present in the fractions, coming fully into presence in the totality, which it fulfills. The superficial ordering of the fractional parts may be a linear series, this next to that and so on; but the ordering of the parts with respect to the emergent whole, the essential ordering, is nested and not linear. Thus the emergence of the whole is orthogonal to the accumulation of parts, because it is the coming into presence of the whole which is whole, the whole which is immanent.

The way the whole emerges is by coming into presence within parts. The whole comes to presence part-ially because it is within parts, and it is by im-part-ation, by coming into presence within parts, that the whole can be whole. The whole is imparted in that it is present within parts, which thus become its parts and cease to be just bits and pieces. It is by impartation as a coming into presence within its parts that the whole holds to its essence. The whole cannot come out without ceasing to be whole and becoming all and everything, falling into the plural totality of identity in difference. For then the whole would become the object (ob-ject; that which is thrown out) which is the collection of objects, and so cease to be authentically whole. Thus it is essential that the whole comes into presence within parts, so that the whole presences within its parts.

This tells us something fundamental about the whole in a way which shows us the significance of the parts. If the whole presences within its parts, then a part is a place for the presenting of the whole. If a part is to be an arena in which the whole can be present it cannot be any old thing. Parts are not bits and pieces, because a part is only a part if it is such that it can bear the whole. There is a useful ambivalence here: 'to bear' in the sense of 'to pass through' and 'to carry'; and 'to bear' in the sense of 'to suffer', where this is taken in the sense of 'to undergo'. By itself the part is nothing, not even a part. But the whole cannot be whole without the part. The part becomes significant itself through becoming a bearer of the whole.

A part is special, not accidental, because it must be such as to let the whole come into presence. This speciality of the part is particularly important because it shows us the way to the whole. It clearly indicates that the way to the whole is into and through the parts. The whole is nowhere to be encountered except in the midst of the parts. It is not to be encountered by stepping back to take an overview, for it is not over and above the parts, as if it were some superior over-arching part. The whole is to be encountered by stepping right into the parts. This is how we enter into the nesting of the whole, and thus move into the whole as we pass through the parts.

This dual movement, into the whole through the parts, is demonstrated clearly in the experiences of speaking and reading, listening and writing. We can see that in each case there is a dual movement; we move through the parts to enter into and under the whole which presences within the parts. When we understand, both movements come together. When we do not understand we merely pass along the parts. For example, let us consider the interpretation of a difficult text. At first encounter we just pass along the parts, reading the words without understanding. To come to understand the text we have to enter into it, and this we do in the first place by sounding out the words. We enter into the text as the medium of meaning through the words themselves, not by referring the words to some other external

text placed in a superior position of authority in interpretation. We put ourselves into the text in a way which makes us available to meaning. This hermeneutic approach is the antithesis of an analysis which stands back to look upon the text as an object to be separated into parts. Analyzing into parts is a way of refusing to enter the parts. Entering into the parts is an approach into a work which is working, and not a retreat to an object of analytical knowledge. The whole is nowhere to be encountered except in the midst of the parts; it is here that meaning is to be encountered as a transforming presence. It is not to be encountered by stepping back to take an overview, for it is not over and above the parts like some superior over-arching part. The whole is to be encountered only by stepping right into the parts.

### **III. THE WHOLESOME ENCOUNTER**

The question which now presents itself directly is that of how we come into an encounter with the whole. We have begun to meet with this question already, but it becomes necessary now to enter more fully into the theme of the wholesome encounter.

#### **3.1 The Active Absence**

Everything we encounter in the world can be said to be either one thing or another, either this or that, either before or after, and so on. Wherever we look there are different things to be distinguished from one another; this book here, that pen there, the table underneath, and so on. Glancing about us we recognize a multitude of different things, side by side, laid out in mutual self-distinction. Each is outside of each other, and thus all are separate each from every other. But in recognizing the things about us in this way we too, by this recognition, are separate from and outside of each of the things we recognize. Thus we find ourselves in recognition laid out side by side, together with and separate from, the things we recognize. This is the familiar spectator awareness; in the moment of recognizing a thing we stand outside of that thing, and in the moment of so standing outside of that thing we turn outside into an 'I' which knows that thing, for there cannot be an 'outside' without the distinction of something being outside of some other thing. Thus the 'I' of 'I know' arises in the knowing of something in the moment of recognition of the thing known. By virtue of its origin, the 'I' which knows is outside of what it knows. Also, by virtue of this same origin, the 'I' which knows is outside of itself, for it can know itself in self-awareness.

We cannot know the whole in the way in which we know things because we cannot recognize the whole as a thing. If the whole were available to be recognized in the same way as we recognize the things which surround us, then the whole would be counted among these things as one of them. So we could point and say "here is this" and "there is that", and "that's the whole over-there". If we could do this we would know the whole in the same way that we know its parts, for the whole itself would simply be numbered among its parts, so that the whole would be outside of its parts in just the same way that each part is outside of all the other parts (look how each word of a sentence is outside of all the other words of that sentence). But the whole comes into presence within its parts, so we cannot encounter the whole in the same way as we encounter the parts. Thus we cannot know the whole in the way that we know things and recognize ourselves knowing things. So we should not think of the whole as if it were a thing (but we always do!), for in so doing we effectively deny the whole

inasmuch as we are making as if to externalize that which can presence only within the things which are external with respect to our awareness of them. (Consider how the meaning of a sentence is not another word of the sentence.)

Awareness is occupied with things. It is in the knowing of things that the 'I' of 'I know' becomes self-aware, and hence it is in this knowing that we find ourselves in the world. Looked at from the side of things, which is where we stand in self-awareness, the whole is absent. The whole is absent to awareness because it is not a thing among other things. It is for this reason that the whole is easily forgotten, after which its presence is unsuspected. What stands before us is the parts, and it is in standing before the parts that we recognize ourselves. But the whole does not stand before us; we are not its spectator. Since the whole comes into presence within its parts, and not outside of them in any way, then the whole is quite un-thinglike or un-partlike (think of the difference between the meaning of a sentence and a word of the sentence). Thus from the side of awareness, the whole is a no-thing.

To awareness, no-thing is nothing. This must be so, since awareness is awareness of something. But it is here that we have a choice, and it is a fateful choice. Since no-thing and nothing cannot be distinguished within awareness, then the whole which is no-thing can be taken as a mere nothing, in which case it vanishes in the forgetfulness of awareness. When this happens we are left with a world of things alone, and the apparent task of putting them together to make a whole. This taking of the whole which is no-thing to be mere nothing is the origin of nihilism. We can say that the essence of nihilism is that it takes nothing to be nothing, and having already prepared the ground for this we can see immediately the deep truth of this apparent triviality. It is a startling consequence of the origin of nihilism in the forgetful vanishing of the whole into mere nothing, that all efforts at integration and synthesis are inherently nihilistic. This must be so, since the attempt to build the whole from the side of separate things reinforces the forgetful vanishing of the whole. Such efforts disregard the authentic whole. But it is in just this way that the counterfeit wholes of science, technology, and indeed the whole of contemporary culture, are produced.

The other side of the choice is to take the whole to be no-thing but not nothing. This is difficult for awareness, which cannot distinguish no-thing from nothing. Yet we have an illustration immediately on hand with the experience of reading. We do not take the meaning of a sentence to be a word. The meaning of a sentence is no-word. But evidently this is not the same as nothing, for if it were we could never read! The whole presences within parts, but from the standpoint of the awareness which grasps the external parts the whole is an absence. But it can be an active absence inasmuch as we do not try to be aware of the whole, as if we could grasp it like a part, but instead let ourselves be open to be moved by the whole. Inasmuch as we do not try to be actively aware of the whole, so equally we will not be self-aware. Our active awareness will be taken up with the parts, and we will be aware of ourselves there with the parts. But we will not be aware of ourselves being moved by an active absence, not aware in the sense of the self-awareness of the T of 'I know'. The first step into the wholesome encounter comes when 'I' is absent, or occupied with things, so that the whole which is an absence with respect to awareness comes into presence. We do not notice this peculiar non-aware sensitivity to the active absence. We do not notice it because we are identified with the 'I' of awareness, and hence we are dependent upon things and think that

presence is merely a matter of location of manifestation. But this sensitivity to the active absence accompanies the ordinary awareness which eclipses it, and this sensitivity can be developed.

A particularly graphic illustration of the development of a sensitivity to the whole situation as an active absence is to be found in the training of a samurai swordsman. The earnest pupil tries hard, but the harder he tries the worse he gets. He tries hard by concentrating on his opponent; he watches him, and himself, carefully waiting for his chance. This sounds excellent, but it is useless. It is useless because the pupil is relying entirely on what he can hold in his awareness, with the inevitable consequence that perception and action are separate, and the action is always too late. Thus the pupil is encumbered by the 'I' of his self-awareness, with which he is identified, and which holds him in a state of separation in the situation. He always waits too long because he looks upon the situation as being made up of himself and his opponent interacting via their swords. Because he experiences himself as being the origin of his action, and not the situation itself, he cannot be touched by the whole and so cannot be moved by the whole situation. He is in the paradoxical position—which nevertheless seems perfectly normal to him—of being on the outside of his own situation. The following story tells how one fencing master dealt with this.\*

Once, when a disciple came to a master to be disciplined in the art of fencing, the master, who was in retirement in his mountain hut, agreed to undertake the task. The pupil was made to help him gather wood for kindling, draw water from the nearby spring, split wood, make the fire, cook rice, sweep the rooms and the garden, and generally look after his household affairs. There was no regular or technical teaching in the art. After some time the young man became dissatisfied, for he had not come to work as a servant to the old gentleman, but to learn the art of swordsmanship. So one day he approached the master and asked him to teach him. The master agreed. The result was that the young man could not do any piece of work with any feeling of safety. For when he began to cook rice early in the morning, the master would appear and strike him from behind with a stick. When he was in the midst of his sweeping, he would be feeling the same blow from somewhere, from an unknown direction. He had no peace of mind, he had to be always on the qui vive. Some years passed before he could successfully dodge the blow from whatever source it might come. But the master was not quite satisfied with him yet. One day the master was found cooking his own vegetables over an open fire. The pupil took it into his head to avail himself of this opportunity. Taking up his big stick, he let it fall on the head of the master, who was then stooping over the cooking pan to stir its contents. But the pupil's stick was caught by the master with the cover of the pan. This opened the pupil's mind to the secrets of the art, which had hitherto been kept from him. He then for the first time really appreciated the unparalleled kindness of the master.

\* Suzuki, D. T., *Zen Buddhism and Its Influence on Japanese Culture*. See also Herrigel, E., *Zen in the Art of Archery*

In this way the pupil was relieved of his dependence on the awareness which restricted him to observation of one thing at a time, obliging him to be, paradoxically, no more than a spectator outside of the situation in which he is a participant. Western psychology today, which is nihilistic, has no place for the whole, so that the openness to the active absence

which is displayed here would have to be interpreted in terms of very fast, split-second timing.

A more familiar illustration of the active absence is provided by the enacting of a play. An actor does not stand away from his part as if it were an object to be enclosed in awareness. He enters into his part in such a way that he enters into the play. If the play is well-constructed the whole play comes into presence within the parts, so that the actor encounters the play through his part. But he does not encounter the play as an object of knowledge over which he can stand, like the lines he learns. He encounters the play in the part as an active absence which can begin to move him. When this happens the actor starts to be acted by the play, instead of trying to act the play. The origin of the acting becomes the play itself, instead of the actor's subjective 'I'. So the actor no longer imposes himself on the play, as if it were an object to be mastered, but he listens to the play and allows himself to be moved by it. In this way he enters into the part in such a way that the play speaks through him. This is how, his awareness occupied with the lines to be spoken, he encounters the whole which is the play—not as an object, but as an active absence.

### **3.2 The Turning Around into the Whole**

There are many hermeneutic illustrations of the active absence— watching a play, playing a game, reading, writing and speaking, and so on—which are similar to the case of the actor playing his part in the play. They each can demonstrate the reversal which comes in turning from subjective awareness into the wholesome encounter. This turning around, from grasping to being grasped, from awareness of an object to letting an absence be active, from T to the whole, is a reversal which is the first practical consequence of choosing the path which assents to the whole as no-thing and not mere nothing.

It is just because of this very reversal that the whole must be invisible to the scientific approach, as currently conceived. The paradigm for modern scientific method is Kant's "appointed judge who compels the witnesses to answer questions which he has himself formulated". Science believes itself to be objective, but it is in essence subjective because the witness is compelled to answer questions which the scientist himself has formulated. The direction is from the scientist as origin to an object of enquiry which reflects back what the scientist takes to be an answer. In this way the scientist believes that he comes to know the unknown. He never notices the delusion which consists in his trying to go from the known to the unknown, and thus attempting to treat the unknown as if it were a kind of known. He never notices this because he believes he hears the voice of 'nature' speaking, not realizing that it is the transposed echo of his own voice. The scientist certainly gives 'nature' the last word, but only after he himself has had the first word.

Thus modern science can only approach the whole as if it were a thing among things. It must try to grasp the whole as its object for interrogation. Trapped in subjective awareness, it cannot understand that the authentic direction of discovery is from the unknown to the known, because this direction is not open to the awareness which holds onto things. This direction becomes possible only with the turning around which lets the whole—which is absent with respect to awareness—be active. So it is that science today is, by virtue of the method which is its hallmark, left with a broken world of things which it must thus seek to

put together. (The ontology of this broken world has been caricatured magnificently by Samuel Beckett in his plays, and particularly in his novels.)

Science has great need for the whole, but by virtue of its own nature it must exclude the whole. Thus science must build counterfeits by introducing connections, interactions and relations into the world of things. All such attempts ultimately fail, because they are based in ignorance on the condition which is left when the whole has vanished into mere nothing. The consequence of this shows clearly in the attempt to establish a connection. The essence of connection is separation, because when a connection is made to overcome a separation, the ground of the connection is that it is *to overcome a separation*. Thus establishing the connection essentially affirms the separation.

It is no accident that the mathematical method is so useful in the attempt to build counterfeits for the whole. The core of modern mathematics is the axiomatic method, which means starting with a set (the ideal representative of nihilism), and defining operations upon the members of the set to produce patterns of relationships. It is this axiomatic method which has now become the very archetype of method in our metaphysical-scientific-technological civilization, and as such it has become ubiquitous. For example, management attempts to organize and develop business and industrial structures by introducing connections between supposedly separate elements which have been pre-defined. Consequently we should not imagine that the subjectivity of science, the loss of the whole, and the endeavour to provide counterfeits in ignorance of this loss, are limited to physics, chemistry and a few others. On the contrary, this is a foundational condition of the contemporary western mind. It is the foundational condition of all forms of thinking currently available to western man, including the so-called new forms of thought such as systems thinking and structural thinking—which are not new in any way whatsoever. It is not a matter of finding new concepts for the whole. For where there is concept there is idea, and where there is an idea there is an object of thought which represents something from which it is quite separate, and hence there is separation and awareness, and the whole is lost. The encounter with the whole cannot be understood conceptually. We need a non-conceptual thinking of the whole, and this means that we would not easily be able to recognize it as thinking. This is because such thinking would be non-metaphysical, and all thinking of knowledge in science and technology is fundamentally metaphysical (Heidegger: “metaphysics is only the ontology or knowledge”). It is not a matter of giving up metaphysics in a futile attempt to retreat, but of going through metaphysics and beyond to a thinking which is quite other. It is what begins to happen with the turning around into the whole.

The turning around into the whole begins with the development of a sensitivity to the active absence, the development of an openness which lets the whole come to be, not as an object which stands over against us in localized manifestation, but as a presence which emerges globally so that we find ourselves everywhere within it. It is as if we become the object for the whole which can never be our object. This seems strange to us, and it does so because this is how the entry into the wholesome encounter seems from the side of the awareness of things. It is just because there is no place for the whole among the things which are the objects of awareness that the inversion which the wholesome encounter constitutes with respect to awareness seems so unthinkable. But we can help to mitigate this strangeness by exploring a

practical case, and it is particularly useful to consider a case where the way into the wholesome encounter seems to be blocked. An excellent opportunity is provided by the sense of having failed to understand something through becoming overcome by detail. When this happens we say that we “can’t see the wood for the trees”, and this saying has the advantage that it is literally as well as figuratively true.

Let us first explore the literal case. Standing in a wood, surrounded by individual trees, we tell ourselves that we can’t see the wood for the trees. This carries the implication that it is possible to see the wood, but something is getting in the way, namely the trees. Consequently we must introduce a distance between ourselves and the trees by changing our position and walking out of the wood. Crossing the boundary from inside to outside constitutes a standing back from the wood, but we still fail to see anything but trees. If we could climb a convenient hill, or go up in a helicopter, we could perhaps find a position from which to observe the totality of the trees enclosed within their own tree boundary. From such a vantage point we would seem to be able to see all of the trees taken together, although we would not see all of each individual tree. We would have an object before us, an object which we could see and know that we were seeing. We could then point and say “there’s the wood”, and we could do this because we would be separated from the totality of trees, standing over against them as a collected unit. But what is this collected unit but the totality of trees? We would still see nothing but trees, just the same as when we were inside the wood and complained that the trees impaired our vision of the wood itself. The only difference is that from our vantage point outside the wood we would be able to see the totality of the trees and not just a few of them. But this would be achieved with considerable loss in richness of concrete detail. The totality over against which we stood would be a poorer object to see compared to what could be seen inside the wood, but it would be no more than more of the same trees. The attempt to encounter the wood by distancing from it results in seeing it as no more than the set of objects called trees, so that “wood” is no more than a class-name. This is the nihilistic external wood. We might even call it the axiomatic or mathematical wood—let the wood  $W$  be a set of trees  $T_1 \dots T_n$ . But it is not the living wood.

Let us consider what happens if we move back towards the wood. What happens when we cross the boundary to enter into the wood? The only difference would be that we would be surrounded by trees instead of having them collected together in a unit standing over against us in one direction only. There would be no fundamental change in what is seen—although there would be an increased richness of detail—because we would continue to see individual trees before us as separate countable objects. So there is no fundamental difference between being inside or outside the wood. This distinction does not mark a discontinuity in experience, but merely a relative transposition of orientation. Since there is no perceptual change when we are inside it is the same as being outside, and vice versa. So it really does look as if “wood” is no more than a class-name.

But this is all no more than how it is for the observer awareness which grasps things as objects for the self-reflective  $T$  to claim to see and know. This indifference between inside and outside is characteristic of the awareness of things, and it fades away as we enter into the whole—some encounter. It is important to stress that for the observer awareness of things there is no fundamental difference between being inside or outside of the wood, because upon entering a



wood we all sense that there is a difference, but may not notice that this sense does not come immediately from what we can see and know. The sense of difference between inside and outside comes from the active absence, which is the way through which we begin to participate in the presence of the wood. There is an entry into the wood which sacrifices the self-centred awareness and begins to let the wood be. To the degree that this happens, we find ourselves being met by the wood—not just individual trees in their places, but the sense of a ubiquitous presence coming towards us. This is so different to seeing the trees that we can begin to sense that ‘wood’ does have a significance in itself, not as an object but as that which presences through the trees. The first encounter is like bursting through a bubble into a living presence which implodes upon us, and which is ‘there’ but nowhere, often seeming to be more real than we are to ourselves. This is how we begin to participate in a presence sensed as an active absence which is distinctly different to the standing-back awareness of individual trees as things. This is how we begin to enter into ‘the within’ of the wood, which is quite distinct from the inside which is the same as the outside. The within of the wood is more immediate than the inside of the wood, because the inside is already outside.

The sensitivity to the wood as an active absence is unfortunately often lost through degeneration into sentimentality, ‘nice’ feelings and silly remarks about how lovely everything is. It is by this degeneration that the subjective awareness slyly tries to grasp for itself what can never belong to it. This is possibly the reason why we look upon such experiences as pleasing, but merely subjective and not to be taken seriously—which is ironic because it is in fact the beginning of truly objective experience, as distinct from the subjectively “objective” experience of the awareness and knowledge of things. A further reason for doubting the authenticity of such experiences is that the perception cannot be verified in the way in which it can with the awareness of things, and it is just this thing-based verifiability that constitutes our familiar, but nihilistic, criterion for reality.

But the turning around into the wood can go further than the development of a sensitivity to the active absence. It may not often do so, but it is always possible. There are discrete stages of the turning around, each of which is a quite different mode of encounter with the whole, and each of which is stepped into through a discontinuity. The attempt to grasp the whole as an object of knowledge is not an authentic stage of the wholesome encounter, for it is an essential denial of the whole. But when placed in the context of the authentic stages it can be seen as the nihilistic or null stage. The first authentic stage of the wholesome encounter is the becoming sensitive to the active absence, but it is inherent to this stage that it is not easily recognized for what it is. This stage reaches its limit with the sense of implosion, of an invisible presence coming towards us. This stage goes no further, but it is just at this point that a discontinuity can occur and a further stage of the wholesome encounter can be entered, a stage which is a deeper turning around into the whole.

The deeper turning into the whole is marked by an instantaneous reversal from the experience of seeing to the experience of being seen. It is quite distinct and unmistakable: it is not a matter of as if we were being seen, but the actual experience of being seen. The wood is no longer an active absence to which we have developed a sensitivity, for we now encounter the wood face-to-face, but in a way which is inside-out with respect to our awareness of the things around us. We experience ourselves being looked at, being watched from every direction at

once, so that the wood implodes upon us and we experience ourselves being seen by the whole wood. It is when this happens that we can truly say that we are within the wood, and that the wood is the living whole and not just the totality of the set of trees. We cannot go out to the whole to know it, because we would have to go in every way at once. But the whole can come to us because every direction can implode upon us. This is the radical reversal which marks the second stage of the turning around into the whole. So we can never see the wood, only the trees. The wood is invisible to our seeing, but we can be seen by the wood and experience ourselves being seen by the wood. It is in this respect that we can encounter the wood which sees us through the trees, and in so doing we find that seeing is far more than only a property of subjective man.

The wholesome encounter brings about a radical transformation in our attitude to the natural environment and the biosphere. Standing in the arrogance of subjective awareness we approach nature as dumb and stupid, as something which needs to be re-arranged, harnessed and put to good use by us, whom we imagine to be the possessors and sole bearers of intelligence. But the turning around into the whole shows us that nature should be entered into watchfully with care. It shows us that watchfulness is essential in that nature is a living presence which can communicate with us if we can turn around into the right condition for being spoken to and hearing ourselves being spoken to. This is not the final stage in the turning around into the whole, but we are not going to consider any further stages in this present work.

### **3.3 The Whole Man**

The entry into the wood provides a remarkably useful paradigm for encounter experiences. As such it provides a foundation for a hermeneutic of all human situations, and thus ultimately for the ontology of Human Being. We will consider briefly a few illustrations, starting with the case of reading a difficult text—an illustration we have previously found to be useful.

When we start to read a text we cross a boundary to enter into the text itself. We try to get into the text to find the meaning, but all we find is words. We find ourselves confronting a few individual words, which become the objects of our awareness as we pass from one to the other in moving through the text, and surrounded by the rest of the words which constitute the remainder of the text. Isolated patches of the text may seem to bear some meaning of their own, but the meaning which is the whole evades us. In struggling to enter into such a text we begin to sense that we “can’t see the wood for the trees”, and it seems natural to stand back to try to get an overview. We believe that if we stand back from the text we will be able to fit it together into a whole, and so see the meaning which is the whole standing before us as an object of knowledge. Indeed, it can even sometimes seem that we are successful in this endeavour inasmuch as we find that we can say “this text is saying X, Y and Z”. But this is in effect an attempt to substitute a drastically reduced text for the original, and it must be poorer in meaning and literally superficial since it is how the text is seen from outside. The attempt to stand outside of the text opens the way for manipulation and technique. The text can be analyzed in any number of ways, and all kinds of extraneous meanings and interpretations imported from elsewhere can be stuck onto it. But its authentic meaning lies hidden, obscured by such efforts. The attempt to understand the text by going outside of it is completely

contrary to understanding. Such a transposition is alongside-standing instead of understanding, for it places us side-by-side with the text, reducing it to an object of knowledge. Thus it is an attempt to stand outside of the whole, as if it were one thing among other things. This attempt to slide the whole outside into sidedness is in fact an impossible attempt to know understanding— yet, although this is absurd, it is the basis of much in our contemporary teaching and assessment system.

To understand we must go inside-under, not outside-over. The authentic way to the meaning of the text is just like the way into the wood. We begin to turn around into the whole by developing a sensitivity to the active absence. Our first encounter with the meaning of the whole develops through letting the whole meaning begin to act upon us. The mark of this stage is that insights and intuitions suddenly jump in to mind, bearing the sense of a common origin, so that they open into a developing pattern in the stillness of our attention. We begin to sense the meaning of the whole coming through these messengers. At first we usually claim such insights as our own thoughts, often by surreptitiously sliding into sidedness via the concept of the unconscious. But they are not our possessions inasmuch as their origin is not in our subjective thought. They come from the whole, the meaning of the text, which begins to act upon us inasmuch as we permit it by under-standing.

Usually we do not go further than this first stage of understanding— in truth, usually we do not go even this far! But it can happen that the next stage of understanding is entered, the stage we can enter only by going through the radical reversal. If this happens it is unmistakable. We suddenly find ourselves standing still watching ourselves reading and listening to ourselves hearing the words, but in the same moment we find ourselves aware of being watched and hearing ourselves being spoken to. Whereas the words we read are individually before us, and even the seeing and hearing of the words seems to be ‘out there’, the voice which speaks to us comes from another direction. We are inside looking out at the seeing and hearing of the words, but being spoken to from within by a voice which comes from beyond inside but is more immediate than the sound of any of the words we are listening to ourselves hearing on the outside. It does not come from outside, or from the inside which is still outside; it comes from within inside. It is not the sound of any particular word, set of words, or even the totality of the words. It is the voice which conveys the whole, the whole-sound of the word-whole, which implodes upon us from within the text into which we have turned around. The voice of the whole is quiet but complete; it is a sound within the sound of the words which is silence in comparison to the noise of their outside sound.

This is how we can come into encounter with the essential message which is said by the whole which is itself just this saying of the message. This is the message which never was written in the words and cannot be said by the totality of the words, but which comes into presence only through the words. We are radically converted to the meaning which is the whole. We do not find this meaning by stepping into sidedness and taking an overview, which would be over-standing, but by standing under the whole. Thus it is true to say that we are understanding, but never that we have understanding, as if it were a subjective possession from which we could be separated. The experience of the radical conversion which is the second stage of the turning around into the whole should never be looked upon as ‘mystical’. This experience is in

the nature of Human Being as Man, but not of man in the restricted sense of the self-reflexive 'I' of subjective observer awareness.

The related experiences to reading—writing, speaking and listening —can all go through the stages of the wholesome encounter to pass through the radical con-version. This gives us new ground for the way we stand towards language. The ordinary view of language is the axiomatic view. This view says that language consists of a set of signs to which we arbitrarily assign meanings and apply rules of combination to generate structures. This ordinary view is at base the scientific view of language. Looked at in terms of the wholesome encounter, we can see immediately that it is an attempt to stand outside of language, to analyze it as an object according to external criteria, and to try to see how it can be put together. Such an attempt to get an overview of language is nihilistic and constitutes a movement away from understanding. But it is just the assumption of an outside, non-linguistic view of language which lies behind the science of linguistics, as well as behind our common sense view of language. For example, the proliferation of jargon in technology and business produces a plethora of counterfeits arising from the tacit assumption that words are empty signs which must and can be given meanings.

We are accustomed to imagining that we are outside of language, which stands over against us as an object of awareness. Consequently we cannot notice that this position is counterfeit, because we cannot notice that the 'I' which seems to itself to see, know and manipulate language is itself a linguistic structure, a condensation in language. The very suggestion seems absurd! But if we begin to turn around into the whole, to enter into the language from which we cannot escape, the suggestion begins to seem less queer. As we become sensitive to language as the active absence we cease trying to think, to speak, to write, and so on, by making efforts to manipulate and put together words. We gradually become quietly attentive, and in so becoming we let language be. Thus language can begin to act upon us, and we find words, sentences and paragraphs, and so on, coming forth to meet us. The words which are said come from language, not from us subjectively. At this stage of understanding we cannot easily grasp this, but we can become sensitive to language as an unspoken presence which comes towards us. It is not easy, for it is not by any means a matter of accepting every word which comes up. At first most of the words which come forth are thrown up from the noise of subjective associations. We have to learn how to distinguish this chatter from that which comes from language. In doing this we begin to recognize the way in which the 'I' which knows and the world which it knows are linguistic.

If we go further into the wholesome encounter and pass through the radical con-version, then we find that "It is language that speaks, not man" (Heidegger). The language which speaks in the saying-event is the Logos, the origin-al essence of language. It is the language which speaks through the words, but which can never be encountered by manipulating words as instruments. This language is already meaningful, and hence it says the world. It is authentic language which speaks and not man, but it is man who has the power to let language speak, and hence to let world be disclosed. We hear the authentic speaking of language only insofar as we have turned around into the whole, and we are lost to language if we try to master it. We hear the authentic language to the extent that we let it have its say. But this 'letting' is anything but passive. 'To let be' is not to leave alone and wait for what turns up. 'To let be'

requires neither the activity of busy effort nor the vacancy of disengaged passivity. It requires a different, more subtle kind of work.

As a somewhat different illustration of the stages of understanding, let us consider briefly the performance of a dance or rhythmical movement ourselves aware of being watched and hearing ourselves being spoken to. Whereas the words we read are individually before us, and even the seeing and hearing of the words seems to be 'out there', the voice which speaks to us comes from another direction. We are inside looking out at the seeing and hearing of the words, but being spoken to from within by a voice which comes from beyond inside but is more immediate than the sound of any of the words we are listening to ourselves hearing on the outside. It does not come from outside, or from the inside which is still outside; it comes from within inside. It is not the sound of any particular word, set of words, or even the totality of the words. It is the voice which conveys the whole, the whole-sound of the word-whole, which implodes upon us from within the text into which we have turned around. The voice of the whole is quiet but complete; it is a sound within the sound of the words which is silence in comparison to the noise of their outside sound.

This is how we can come into encounter with the essential message which is said by the whole which is itself just this saying of the message. This is the message which never was written in the words and cannot be said by the totality of the words, but which comes into presence only through the words. We are radically converted to the meaning which is the whole. We do not find this meaning by stepping into sidedness and taking an overview, which would be overstanding, but by standing under the whole. Thus it is true to say that we are understanding, but never that we have understanding, as if it were a subjective possession from which we could be separated. The experience of the radical conversion which is the second stage of the turning around into the whole should never be looked upon as 'mystical'. This experience is in the nature of Human Being as Man, but not of man in the restricted sense of the self-reflexive 'I' of subjective observer awareness.

The related experiences to reading—writing, speaking and listening—can all go through the stages of the wholesome encounter to pass through the radical conversion. This gives us new ground for the way we stand towards language. The ordinary view of language is the axiomatic view. This view says that language consists of a set of signs to which we arbitrarily assign meanings and apply rules of combination to generate structures. This ordinary view is at base the scientific view of language. Looked at in terms of the wholesome encounter, we can see immediately that it is an attempt to stand outside of language, to analyze it as an object according to external criteria, and to try to see how it can be put together. Such an attempt to get an overview of language is nihilistic and constitutes a movement away from understanding. But it is just the assumption of an outside, non-linguistic view of language which lies behind the science of linguistics, as well as behind our common sense view of language. For example, the proliferation of jargon in technology and business produces a plethora of counterfeits arising from the tacit assumption that words are empty signs which must and can be given meanings.

We are accustomed to imagining that we are outside of language, which stands over against us as an object of awareness. Consequently we cannot notice that this position is counterfeit,

because we cannot notice that the 'I' which seems to itself to see, know and manipulate language is itself a linguistic structure, a condensation in language. The very suggestion seems absurd! But if we begin to turn around into the whole, to enter into the language from which we cannot escape, the suggestion begins to seem less queer. As we become sensitive to language as the active absence we cease trying to think, to speak, to write, and so on, by making efforts to manipulate and put together words. We gradually become quietly attentive, and in so becoming we let language be. Thus language can begin to act upon us, and we find words, sentences and paragraphs, and so on, coming forth to meet us. The words which are said come from language, not from us subjectively. At this stage of understanding we cannot easily grasp this, but we can become sensitive to language as an unspoken presence which comes towards us. It is not easy, for it is not by any means a matter of accepting every word which comes up. At first most of the words which come forth are thrown up from the noise of subjective associations. We have to learn how to distinguish this chatter from that which comes from language. In doing this we begin to recognize the way in which the 'I' which knows and the world which it knows are linguistic.

If we go further into the wholesome encounter and pass through the radical con-version, then we find that "It is language that speaks, not man" (Heidegger). The language which speaks in the saying-event is the Logos, the origin-al essence of language. It is the language which speaks through the words, but which can never be encountered by manipulating words as instruments. This language is already meaningful, and hence it says the world. It is authentic language which speaks and not man, but it is man who has the power to let language speak, and hence to let world be disclosed. We hear the authentic speaking of language only insofar as we have turned around into the whole, and we are lost to language if we try to master it. We hear the authentic language to the extent that we let it have its say. But this 'letting' is anything but passive. 'To let be' is not to leave alone and wait for what turns up. 'To let be' requires neither the activity of busy effort nor the vacancy of disengaged passivity. It requires a different, more subtle kind of work.

As a somewhat different illustration of the stages of understanding, let us consider briefly the performance of a dance or rhythmical movement of some complexity. In the beginning we are given a set of movements to be performed in a sequence. We try to learn the sequence and hold it in mind. Thus prepared, we set out to perform the movements, and the first result will probably be that we fall about all over the place. In this first stage we are looking upon ourselves and the dance as separate, and so we are trying to be on the outside of the dance which we ourselves are attempting to perform. If, to overcome our difficulty, we try hard to master the dance, we find that we can limit our awkwardness by great effort. But the awkwardness is only too apparent the moment we relax our effort. If we continue in this way for a sufficient length of time, we find that the effort needed to limit the awkwardness becomes fixed as a state of tension in our body, and we can give a lifeless imitation of the dance. Our performance may be perfect, but if so it is the perfection of imitation which is complete outsideness. We have made the mistake of thinking that we have to do the dance.

The way into the dance is through the turning around into the whole. The first stage of the wholesome encounter, which is the first stage of understanding the dance, is becoming sensitive to the dance as the active absence. We cease from trying to perform the dance by

force and begin to let the dance be. We become quietly attentive so that the dance can begin to act upon us. We begin to become sensitive to the dance as a presence which comes towards us. We suddenly find ourselves making right movements (and some wrong ones!) without having thought or trying to apply ourselves. We begin to move from a quiet attentiveness and to find ourselves in our own space which is the space of the dance. We have begun to be danced by the dance.

Usually we go no further, but it can happen that we pass through the radical conversion into the second stage of understanding the dance. If this happens it is unmistakable. We suddenly find ourselves standing still watching ourselves dancing through the movements 'out there', but in the same moment we are aware of being watched by the pattern which is the whole dance. This pattern which is the whole dance comes into presence through the movements, but it cannot be danced by the movements, not even in their totality. There is no representation or image for this pattern which is the whole dance. Thus we are radically converted to the whole dance. The Dancer is danced by the dance, but he lets the dance be danced. This is true synergy, for the dancer cannot do the dance from himself, but the dance cannot dance without the dancer.

The experience of standing still and watching oneself performing some action 'out there' is by no means uncommon, notwithstanding the fact that it is so little understood. Often only one face of this experience seems to be noticed, the simultaneous awareness of being watched from within being absent for some reason. This leads to a distortion in the description of the experience which it is important to pick up. We usually describe the experience as one of standing right outside of ourselves, of being outside of our bodies. In fact it is the opposite which is the case. Although we do not notice it, we are usually outside of ourselves (on the outside surface of ourselves) with our bodies, but in the converted condition we are truly inside ourselves having left our bodies on the outside. So the proper description is that our bodies are outside of us in this condition. We do not realize that we are inside looking out because the other face of the experience, being watched from within, is absent. So we interpret the experience as being outside of our bodies because we do not realize that in our ordinary condition of awareness we are outside of ourselves, and hence we do not realize the radical reversal of the turning around into the whole which takes us inside. Thus we do not realize that we usually think of ourselves in an inside-out manner. The ontology of the wholesome encounter, and hence of man, can be indicated by trying to think of a set of concentric spheres with the smallest sphere outermost.

It is when we begin to consider human relationships in terms of the wholesome encounter that we realize the tragic limitation of our lives together. The limitation is tragic because it seems inevitable but is in fact quite unnecessary. Almost everybody in contemporary Western society is involved in some kind of organization. Indeed, to be organizationally bound is almost the distinguishing feature of our kind of society. But we find that behind the current notion of organization, what could be called the 'managerial view', there lies the same axiomatic approach that we have encountered previously. This says that an organization consists of a set of personnel (which is a nice way of saying people reduced to the status of things) who can be assigned to a set of roles to operate on a set of resources to perform a set of tasks. The structures on these sets which follow from the operations are referred to as "the

organization". It is just this axiomatic approach which is embalmed in the systems approach to formal organization theory, and which has thoroughly infested management throughout contemporary organizations.

Looked at in terms of the wholesome encounter we can see immediately that the current managerial approach constitutes an attempt to stand outside of the organization, to take an overview of it as an object for observation and manipulation, and to try to put it together externally, piece by piece. For example, in the traditional approach a team has a manager for a project. He believes that it is his job to take an overview of the project so that he can coordinate it. He tries to see how the project can be performed by putting together a set of tasks, which he then allocates to the members of his team. It does not matter how he does this, whether he tells people what to do, or whether they all get together to work it out by team discussion. It does not matter because the tasks are already preformed, so that each member of the team meets his task from the outside. Thus, as in the case of the dance, he is constrained to imitate himself doing his task. The attempt to overcome the difficulty of this separation is usually made by requiring 'commitment', which under these circumstances means that each member of the team tries to force himself into his task. A good external imitation can be maintained only by a permanent state of tension. If everyone behaves as if he were on the outside, then he approaches all the others as if they were on the outside. So the manager's task comes to be seen as one of applying technique from outside, the effect of which is to stop others from participating authentically in their own situation, so that they have to proceed as if they were outside of their own work. This is the condition of alienation.

Human organizations fail because those involved do not understand, which only begins with the turning around into the whole. Where they do not visibly appear to fail it is because they are held together externally by forces, fears and pressures—in other words, by violence. Thus it is that human organizations today are subjective, notwithstanding all the talk about corporate goals and objectives. What is needed is the development of a sensitivity to the organization as an active absence, so that those involved can begin to enter into a genuine encounter by meeting the 'organization' coming towards them from within. In this way they can have made known to them the genuine needs of their situation, not the counterfeits which arise in subjective imaginations at the top, nor the expert counterfeits prepared by consultants from outside. But this approach is so different to the axiomatic approach to management that it is at first unthinkable to those concerned with techniques for solving problems. Nevertheless, in recent years a group of workers at the Centre for Structural Communication have developed practical materials for beginning the turning around into the whole organization. This work provides a radically new approach to organizational problems which can be followed equally well in industry, education or government.

Many human situations are basically dependent on the encounter of two people. The encounter between two persons is very often only external; each looks upon the other as an object, as a thing among things. Each is outside of the other, separated from the other as an object to be known and manipulated. We do not often notice the externality of our encounters with one another because we are immersed in a bubble of thoughts and sentiments about the other. But these are quite subjective and in no way indicate a genuine encounter with the other. Similarly, we do not notice the artificiality of our relationships with one another. We



develop counterfeit relationships as an attempt to bring us together by overcoming separation. But in this way, as we have seen in other circumstances, separation is preserved and we ensure that we remain outside of one another.

An authentic relationship with another person begins with the turning around into the whole. We begin to understand the other person by becoming sensitive to him as an active absence. We cease from trying to grasp hold of the other person, to know him as an object, to work him out or to make him do things. We begin to let the other person be, becoming sensitive to him as a presence which comes towards us. We no longer know him only externally as an object in our awareness, but neither do we know him as he knows himself externally in his own awareness. We have begun to under-stand him as a presence which is tangible but invisible, greater and subtler than the manifest personality. Furthermore, we find that this kind of relationship is not dependent on coming together and separating, as it is in the case of a counterfeit relationship. If the relationship goes further and passes through the radical conversion, we enter into the second stage of understanding the other person. If this happens we enter directly into an encounter with the whole person, an encounter which the manifest personality of that person, the subjective self which he knows himself as, will not share. These stages of turning around into the whole person are particularly marked in encounters with young children.

Our encounter with ourselves, the self-encounter, follows the same pattern. Our most common self-encounter is external, that is, we meet ourselves outside of ourselves. It is the condition of the self of reflexive awareness to be external, for in seeking to know myself I turn on myself as an object, attempting to over-stand myself. Thus when I imagine that I go inside of myself to find out what I think or feel about something, I am in fact trying to stand outside of myself. If I try to organize myself, try to 'pull myself together' and make myself into something, I am approaching myself as an object to be manipulated. Either my efforts will collapse, or they will appear to succeed if I impose a rigorous discipline on myself. But if I do this I force myself into an external image of myself, fixing my separation from myself and becoming a lifeless counterfeit. This is the condition of self-alienation. 'I' am not me; 'I' am outside me. Thus all that T think, 'I' feel, and so on is external to me; they are not my thoughts, feelings, beliefs, or whatever. All that 'I' take to be my own, including my self-knowledge, is outside of me. Thus ideas and beliefs which 'I' take to be mine can have come from anywhere, and may well have nothing whatsoever to do with me. But T will fight earnestly for causes which 'I' sincerely believe to be mine. 'I' am conditioned.

In this external stage of self-encounter I do not under-stand myself. My self-knowledge comes from the attempt to over-stand. To understand myself, which is to genuinely encounter myself, I must begin the turning around into me. The first stage of the wholesome self-encounter is the development of a sensitivity to myself as an active absence. I become quietly attentive, gradually ceasing my restless efforts to manipulate myself. I begin to let myself be, becoming sensitive to myself as a presence which encompasses 'I' from within. I begin to encounter myself within. I have begun to under-stand myself, so that I can begin to come under the direction of my own life. I find myself having insights and intuitions about myself, quite unlike the thoughts T thinks. I suddenly find myself doing the right things in a situation in a way which I could never have thought out. I begin to sense my own life as a tangible

presence. But at the same time there is a tension between what comes from within and what belongs on the outside. This vanishes only when the radical conversion is passed through into the second stage of under-standing myself. This is the stage of waking up from T to be found by myself. When a person enters this stage he finds himself watching T but being aware of being watched by himself. He is now radically converted to himself: free from 'I' outside, lived from within by the pattern which is himself, his whole life.

The man who is radically converted to himself lives in his own time. His time is always within the present; he is the man who has entered now, the present moment which uniquely is. It is within now that time is to be found. The whole life presences within its parts, but the 'part' within which the whole life presences is now, the present moment. Now is the present of the presencing of the whole, so that the entrance to the whole life is through now. Thus time for the whole man is the hologram- matical condition of the life itself—which gives a significance to birth and death which is radically different to a linear beginning and end.

The man who is outside of himself in self-alienation is the man who has fallen upside-down from the whole into sidedness. In this condition he is "The sort of man who, throwing a stone upon the ground, would miss" (Sufi proverb). The man in alienation does not live in his own time. Indeed, his common condition is that he has no time. He is always falling behind and struggling to catch up. He is outside of now, perpetually falling away from now. This collapse is for him a 'perpetual perishing' which he takes to be time. He wishes to overcome his perilous situation, and thinks that this would mean transcending time. But he does not realize that he is already outside of time, and that his real problem is how to get into it! For the alienated man outside of himself, the present moment shrinks towards a vanishing mathematical point in his falling from the whole. This he interprets as going into the future, which becomes his substitute for now in that this is where everything is going to happen. Thus he takes developing the whole man to mean making someone into something which they are not (yet). But he is upside-down, so that what he takes for becoming is unbecoming, not coming to be but falling away from being—"You will never reach Mecca I fear, for you are on the road to Turkestan" (Sufi proverb). This peculiarity of the fall from the whole into sidedness leads us into a radically different interpretation of human history.

The normal life is the life of the whole man. This is a far cry from the conventional life, the life in which we are outside of ourselves in self-alienation. We are normal to the degree that we under-stand ourselves, and we are mad to the extent that we are outside of ourselves. It sometimes seems that we are fated to madness. Current educational practices lead away from the wholesome encounter into alienation. When school is over, work reinforces alienation. This is nobody's fault, for in this world the trickster is the tricked. But it is tragic, and it is particularly tragic to see children being educated out of themselves. Yet this madness is not inevitable. There is no alternative to be found in the anarchy of the noble savage or the distorted myth of the golden age. The real alternative which is always open is to understand, and this means to begin the turning around into the wholesome encounter. This must be done for the sake of Human Being.

*ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS I wish to express my indebtedness to the work of J. G. Bennett, Hubert Benoit and Martin Heidegger. Of course, they are not responsible for whatever is said in this work.*