

Metaxis and Recovery: Towards a New Vision of Health

CHAPTER THREE

FOUNDATIONS OF THE FIELD MODEL

The authors would like nothing more than to claim exclusive originality with respect to the development of the field approach. At the risk of not being invited to appear on Oprah, Phil or Geraldo we must admit that the field approach was not developed out of a vacuum, but is based upon our readings of many other theorists. In this though we are in good company. Even the genius of Isaac Newton acknowledged the scientific "shoulders" upon which he stood. In this chapter we will briefly discuss who has influenced our approach. It is essentially a brief history of our own personal and professional questioning, and where that questioning led us. This will also serve to begin to introduce how we see the human functioning when the human is viewed from within the field approach. It is remarkably different than our usual Cartesian-influenced understandings.

Western civilization, and indeed, any scientific or personal searching is based upon *question*. Scientists often say that the key to their endeavors is learning to ask the proper questions. Beginning with Socrates, Plato and Aristotle we have devised and inherited a civilization that has responded quite differently than have Eastern civilizations to the questions raised by the human encounter with boundary and limit, and raised during the search for human happiness and fulfillment. This is not to say Occidental responses to this question are somehow "better" than Oriental responses. They are merely different. The conception of, and approach to the human as a dynamic field is firmly based within Western responses to the questions raised in the encounter with boundary and limit.

Our heritage begins with Socrates. Socrates never wrote anything himself. All we know of him was largely written by his student Plato. Plato's *Dialogues* are like little plays with Socrates the main character. They are back and forth conversations of people with Socrates. Socrates was first and foremost a questioner. When told that something was "good" or "virtuous" he asked "why is it good or virtuous? What do you mean when you use those words?" Socrates took nothing for granted. This proved to be a threat to the society, and so he was executed. Whenever we question we potentially threaten our values, what we think is right or wrong, what we feel is good or evil. The history of ideas is moved through time by the power of the human question. Even today, totalitarian governments find they must crush those who question. To question is to threaten. The field approach to the human is a response to a question, and as a response it threatens the prevailing Cartesian world view. This purpose of this book is to detail some of the implications of this threat for each area of our lives: psychological, physical, social and spiritual.

The Cartesian paradigm, of course, produced answers to the question inherent during suffering, disease and death (or indeed, any encounter with boundary or limit). However, the authors are unsatisfied with that response. The Cartesian paradigm ignores too much of human experience. It reduces human experience to an

unacceptable degree. Our search for a more satisfactory response to human experiences of boundary and limit, and to the search for fulfillment has resulted in this book. It has resulted in an acceptance of the field paradigm and all that paradigm implies. This response was not developed out of an isolated vacuum, but is based upon the prodigious efforts of many thinkers. We have all heard of Plato and Socrates, but most of us have not actually read Plato. But then, we are not a society that values thinkers enough to worry about their execution as did the ancient Athenians. In the last century though, there have been people to rival Socrates and Plato. It is to these people the authors have turned for help. People you may not have heard of, but remember, our culture *is* largely based upon the work of philosophers.

BEGINNING OF THE FIELD APPROACH: MARTIN HEIDEGGER

In previous discussions we outlined our field understanding of the human. Much of the development of the field approach owes its genesis to the work of the philosopher Martin Heidegger and his later students, Ricouer and Gadamer who we shall meet later in the book. We must state here that Heidegger was a Nazi sympathizer. This has of late caused problems for many people. Certainly the authors do not condone this in Heidegger. We find it puzzling that a person of such insight could have been sucked in by such evil (he even wore a Hitler mustache). However, we are not here to argue the value of written works in light of personalities. Many of us admire the work of Pablo Picasso, yet as a person he was a bit of a creep. So too, we cannot deny the genius of Martin Heidegger.

Heidegger was concerned with what must truly be the big question: the nature of reality itself. He questioned our ontological views: the question of *being* itself. His discoveries are written in the work *Being and Time*. It is a very complex work (understandable given the subject matter) upon which rests many attempts to re-understand the human according to a post-Cartesian paradigm. So complex is this work that at the time of its initial publication (in the 1920s) many people said that it was meaningless--that he was just playing with words. In the translator's preface Macquarrie and Robinson write:

"...Heidegger is constantly using words in ways which are by no means ordinary, and a great part of his merit lies in the freshness and penetration which his very innovations reflect. He tends to discard much of the traditional philosophical terminology, substituting an elaborate vocabulary of his own."

It has taken 30-40 years for us to even begin to understand how profound *Being and Time* really is. We follow Heidegger in having some real problems with the Cartesian world view. It was Heidegger who discovered the problems with the Cartesian view--that an understanding of reality as a collection of independent, isolated entities is simply incorrect.

We tend to think of the world as something "out there." The world is separate from me as a person. It is independent in many ways from my wants and desires. For Heidegger there is no "world" without the human and there is no "human" without the world. They are, quite literally, two sides of the same coin. So radical was this move that Heidegger wouldn't even call us "human." He called our type of being "dasein" or the "there-being." The human is always *there* in a "world." Dasein is always *in* the

world as totally involved and a part of the world. It is decidedly *not* an encounter of an individual, isolated entity with other individual, isolated entities. It transcends, goes beyond Cartesian understandings that see the world as being "out there" and as "I" being "in my body."

We are all familiar with the mind teaser: "If a tree fell in the woods and no one was around to hear it would it make a noise?" This question points us in the direction of the interrelatedness between the human and the world. For Heidegger this question, in some ways, makes no sense because it always posits the relation of human to world *even if that relation is of the human "not there."* We must "have" the human to be not there. We must have the human to even ask the question of the human not being there. World and human are in many ways *one whole "thing."* That is, a field. There is no human without a world and no world without the human is another way of saying that the human is a field of dynamic interactions. Here is how Heidegger wrote about this issue of the tree making a sound in the woods. We present it to you to show how, ah, *interesting* was Heidegger's style of writing!

"Of course only as long as Dasein *is* (that is, only as long as an understanding of Being is ontically possible), 'is there' Being. When Dasein does not exist, 'independence' 'is' not either, nor 'is' the 'in-itself'. In such a case this sort of thing can be neither understood nor not understood. In such a case even entities within-the-world can neither be discovered nor lie hidden. *In such a case* it cannot be said that entities are, nor can it be said that they are not. But *now*, as long as there is an understanding of Being and therefore an understanding of presence-at-hand, it can indeed be said that *in this case* entities will still continue to be."

Whew! We can't really blame Heidegger. His book is a revolution. It is a monumental task of re-questioning all our assumptions concerning reality. Our own book is, in a way, a "filtering down" of Heideggerian ideas. Very, very simply we can say that according to Heidegger the person and the world are not in any way, shape, form or conception two separate things. They are *one* thing. They are like two sides of the same coin. Hopefully, by then end of this book you will have an understanding of how this could be by understanding the field approach and the ramifications of seeing the human-as-field.

So, our first step in constructing the human-as-field consists of this: the world, and all that is in it, including human beings *is essentially one whole thing*. The perception of the world as composed of independent, isolated entities *is essentially an illusion*.

BASIC DYNAMICS OF THE HUMAN-AS-FIELD: ROBERT LIFTON

Even in our own lives as non-scientists we seek to understand other people--their actions and behaviors--according to some relatively simple formula. That is, we are always curious, and almost need to know what motivates people to do the things they do. We might say about someone; "Oh, all he's interested in is money" or "What a brown nose" or "She's nothing but a power monger" etc. Such types of statements or judgments try and uncover the hidden dynamics of the human. In more formal science there is also a quest for the essential dynamic or motivating force in the human. We have all heard of Freud's idea of libido. B.F. Skinner posited that the human is motivated by a search for reward and escape from punishment. Abraham Maslow

thought that all people sought what he called self-actualization. Generally, when we try to understand in a popular way these scientific ideas we tend to lose much of their conceptual nuance.

Our understanding of the basic *dynamics* of the human-as-field, what *motivates* the human draws heavily from the theories and research of Robert Jay Lifton and especially his work *The Life of the Self*. This does not in any way invalidate the thoughts of others such as those mentioned above. It merely relegates their ideas to being *partial* rather than *foundational* dynamics and motivations. Lifton recognized the need for a paradigmatic shift Lifton did not understand the human as a field. Because of this our adaptations of his work are necessarily just that--adaptations. Also, our spiritual perspective is not necessarily endorsed or supported in Lifton's writings. His ideas on symbolic immortality, for example, seem to point to what we call the subjective pole. We would understand this drive as being a process of the divine pole which is known and expresses itself through the other three poles. Lifton's symbolic immortality appears to relate to a process of self-transcendence through symbols, with which we would agree, but there no sustained attention to the mystery or the authentic spirituality that we deem necessary for such self-transcendence. However, his work represents a giant leap in the quest for a post-Cartesian understanding of human dynamics. For this reason we build upon his ideas by adapting many key concepts and integrating them into our field model.

Lifton is a psychiatrist and psychoanalyst influenced by the work of Erik Erickson. His empirical investigations resulted in a questioning of the Freudian notion of libido as the driving force of human behavior. Lifton conducted extensive research. His research method involved interviewing a sample of persons who have encountered major threats to survival. He interviewed and worked with several different groups including: Vietnam veterans coping with the trauma of war, Japanese survivors of atomic explosion, and survivors of the Chinese cultural revolution. These groups were bound together by certain shared themes related to their predicament.

We are greatly indebted to Lifton. Even though he was not operating out of a field approach his ideas on symbolization and its processes are able to be translated into the post-Cartesian field. Lifton recognized early on the need to re-conceptualize human being. He opens *The Life of the Self*: "I want to begin with a statement midway between an observation and a declaration: We are now in the relatively early phases of a momentous shift in psychological paradigm..." The understanding of the human as a field of dynamic forces encourages this shift.

Lifton's work forced him to conclude that the underlying dynamic or force in human life was a *drive to symbolization*. His metapsychology is rooted in the human capacity for symbolization. This drive to symbolization is empowered by the encounter with threats and crises. The human is seen as a perpetual survivor of "holocausts," whether large or small, throughout life. "Holocaust" serves as a powerful metaphor throughout Lifton's work. The primary human motivation for Lifton is towards symbolic immortality, the process of responding to the limits of existence through symbolic transcendence. It is this drive to symbolization that is the hallmark of the "creative hero" of which we have spoken.

The holocaust metaphor evokes and captures the essence of human boundary and limit situations. On a biological level it refers to the threat of physical death. On a psychological level it describes threats to psychic security. These are virtually limitless and include such things as anxiety, depression, physical illness or injury. The stressors in society such as bureaucratization and modernization are also understood as expressions of boundary or limit for the individual. Any kind of loss (e.g. economic, interpersonal) also indicates such an encounter.

Because the role of symbolic meanings is so important in human life, and in particular for the human-as-field we are going to spend some considerable time exploring symbols. While what follows might seem difficult please try and read it slowly. It is germane to gaining a true understanding of the human-as-field. The role of symbolic meanings will be returned to again and again in the rest of the book. A little effort now will make the rest of the book easier to understand.

THE PERVASIVENESS OF SYMBOLS

What enters your head when you think of the word "symbol"? Chances are you think of a specifically religious symbol such as a cross or six point star. But what does a symbol do? The most common, basic answer would be that a symbol stands for something. A symbol always means something or a symbol points to something else. So, for instance, the cross as a symbol represents or means not just an ancient instrument of execution, but an entire system of thought we call "Christianity." But in reality symbols are much, much more than this. They are found not only in churches, but all around us, everyday. For instance, one type of symbol is a red octagon. It symbolizes auto traffic coming to a stop. Another symbol are the golden arches that symbolize a type of hamburger. Symbols are pervasive. The ink stains on this page are symbols. The sounds you utter and call language are symbols.

"[H]uman beings are truly an *animal symbolicum*, beings that live and die, succeed and fail, delight and suffer, work and play, with by and through their symbols. Indeed it is impossible to conceive of the human individual or a human society surviving without such symbols sustaining it. And sustain they do, for with our symbols we humans not only create our world, but create ourselves in the same process."

Symbols and symbolic meanings totally permeate most everything we do. They serve to connect our present lives to the past and future. They assist us in our own self-revelation and self-understanding. They spur us on to reflection and deep thought. They help us make sense of the essential mystery of our own selves and of reality. Symbols help us discover that which is most valuable in life, and conversely permit us to replace it with mundane values. Symbols allow us to communicate with each other. Symbols also highlight that which is different between us. Symbols are the lights by which we understand ourselves, each other and the world. In short, symbols run our lives. We are the animal that symbolizes. It is what we do. William Thompson, who we shall meet later in this chapter writes:

"[T]here can be no such thing as a purely non-linguistic or non-symbolic experience of anything, given the essentially linguistic structure of human cognition. To know is to know through symbolism..."

In some ways though it would be improper to speak of "symbols" in the singular such as "She understands what *a* symbol means" or "*That* particular symbol means so and so." Symbols are never isolated and sufficient unto themselves. You only discover the meaning of one particular symbol because it is embedded and intimately related to countless other symbols. Symbols only work as constellations, not as individual stars. For instance, even so simple a symbol as a stop sign is not really understood outside of the entire web of symbols pertaining to traffic laws, management and etiquette. The Christian cross is a symbol deeply embedded in an entire constellation of symbols. The cross is a meaningless symbol until it is itself illumined by other symbols such as the written symbols of the Gospels. People then spend their entire lives (in the case of monks *exclusively* spend their lives) discovering what meanings and interrelations that one symbol, in turn, shines *its* light upon.

We become lost without the lattice work of symbolic meanings. *We are* symbols. We are the creature that symbolizes. It is what we do, who we are. Our symbolizing processes are unavoidable. To not symbolize is to be dead. We are almost forced to symbolize. Somehow, at the very foundation of our being is some kind of structure or system upon which the network of symbols grows like a rose bush on a trellis. Our culture, which is a constellation of symbols, grows from the symbol of "freedom" to the symbol of "the revolution" to the "white house" to the "stars and stripes" and so on. Each specific symbol is like a blooming rose, yet it is one bush, one whole plant, and underneath the plant and the blossoms is the structure of the trellis. The trellis supports the plant, encourages it to fill its lattice. With a full, healthy, blooming plant we don't see the trellis. The presence of the plant, seemingly defying gravity as it grows up the wall *indicates* the unseen presence of the trellis. Our incredible networks of ever changing, ever growing symbolic networks also indicate an underlying structure. A structure never seen but undergirding, encouraging, supporting all of our activities. In this book we call this the "mystery" and its manifestations in our lives is the processes of symbolization, the re-interpretation of symbols, and of re-symbolization.

The individual always already finds himself present to a world of symbolic meaning. These symbols tend to originate in the social pole of the field. They orient behaviors according to what is considered "right" or "valuable." These symbols generally operate and are appropriated unconsciously. The power of these symbols can be seen in the difference of values ascribed to by various ethnic and economic populations. For instance, we all share certain symbolic orientations by virtue of being American, i.e. we tend not to eat dogs as is the practice of other countries. The symbolic meaning of dogs is of "man's best friend," not as a succulent dinner entree. This dog-as-meaningful-symbol orients our behaviors and sensibilities even as children. We are given a *meaning* associated with dogs that goes well beyond identification of a particular animal. Certain segments of American society develop different meanings and symbols. To a black youth living in the inner city snow white running shoes are loaded with meaning. They are symbols that would not have the same meaning to a white youth living in an affluent suburb.

The extent to which we do not reflect upon, identify, or name the symbolic meanings that automatically orient our lives is an indication of our social conditioning. We are at the mercy of people who are able to manipulate these symbols such as advertisers. Indeed we are at the mercy of these symbols. This can be called the "tyranny of

received views." It is in re-meaning and re-symbolization that human freedom is to be found. Pre-human organisms are largely bio-genetically determined in their behaviors. Humans though, are essentially devoid of instinctual behaviors. Our behaviors are learned. We are socially conditioned by means of received views, meanings, or symbols. In general, these received symbolic meanings act *as do instincts*.

EXAMPLES OF SYMBOLIZATION

It is generally recognized that the Vietnam war was quite unpopular (can any war be called popular?) Today we have an increased concern for the Vietnam vets, but when they returned there was no sense of popular gratitude, there was no memorial. Often the vets found themselves the victims of insult and attack. The vets from WW II could pride themselves on being a part of a "just" war. The Vietnam vets' memories carried no such pride. Many of them went to the war out of a belief in their country and its policies. They risked their lives while people back home were protesting our involvement. The war experience itself was different than WW II in that there was never an easily identifiable enemy. Hence atrocities such as My Lai were bound to happen.

The case of returning Vietnam veterans illustrates the processes of symbolization. Involvement in the war was a severe holocaust experience. The symbolic meanings under which they operated when they went to the war such as "freedom" and "fighting Communism" were found, upon return, to be false or lacking in meaning. Since "no symbol is an island" the returning vets were placed in a position where they questioned the entire constellation of symbols. To extend the metaphor of the plants on the trellis, the vets experienced a pruning of the plant that then led to the death of much of the plant. Persons interviewed by Lifton reported an experience of "numbness" following the war ("numbness" is a term to which we will return). Their lives were disrupted by powerful feelings of guilt and rage emerging from the destruction of their symbolic lattice. They became symbolically disconnected from ordinary social groups and institutions. They experienced a disintegration of ethical and moral beliefs. Personal growth and psychological movement was halted.

As a group, they all were involved in a quest and struggle to connect their war experiences with their present lives via symbolization. There was a need to re-order war and post-war experiences into a meaningful framework. They began to assimilate existing beliefs or create new symbolic beliefs that would explain the meaning of their holocaust experience. Most, according to Lifton, were critical of old beliefs. There was a common feeling that traditional societal beliefs were somehow contaminated by their being linked to the war. Their previous symbolic codes were impoverished or irrelevant in light of the severity of their situation.

The vets sought self regeneration through evoking and affirming new inner symbols. The approaches to this self-regeneration differed according to individual styles. Some involved themselves in community projects, others turned to a revitalized religious commitment, while others experimented with drugs. There was a common pattern of seeking out alternative ritual structures and animating symbols to recover vitality and feelings of connectedness to individual history and to others.

Because of the common pattern among not only the vets, but between all groups studied, Lifton concluded that *psychic energy is synonymous with symbolization*. This "psychoformative" principle is basic to the life of the self. Human personality unfolds according to formative-symbolic processes. Now what exactly does this mean? Well, let's take the words "form" and "formative." Very simply, we could say that a form is any combination of matter and energy. This is essentially what you are, what a planet is etc.

Now, of course, forms change through time. We know that our sun will eventually swell up and turn red. Its form will change. If you eat too many bags of potato chips you too will swell up. Your form will change. We effect forms not only through physical changes, but also symbolic changes. Every time we act or engage in some kind of behavior we act *formatively*. That is, we give form to ourselves, our environment, or to others. Conversely, we also receive form. The symbolic meanings of "fighting Communism" gave form to the entire country of Vietnam.

The human always strives to transcend limits and maintain a sense of formative (meaning-giving/receiving) vitality. No matter how severe the threat to life the self struggles to transcend these crises and preserve vitality through symbolization. Lifton called this the "formative process." People *give form* to themselves, others and the world through psychoformative symbolization. The basic symbolic processes are directed at the problem of *form* (meaning, connection to life, vitality) and *formlessness* (meaninglessness, separation from life, death). The vets' experiences with anger, isolation, drug abuse etc. were attempts to give new symbolic form to themselves, their relationships and their surroundings.

The field approach views symbolization as central to human life. It is the power of symbols and symbolization. *It is the need for, quest for, and necessity of meaning that drives the dynamism of the field*. Following Lifton, these meanings are divided into two main types: proximate and ultimate. The proximate symbols refer to the pragmatic involvements in work, family and community. They guide functional life and ensure practical survival such as the meaningful symbol "get to work on time." Ultimate symbols deal with issues such as the value of life, existence of God, life's goodness or justice. Proximate symbols are dependent upon and are built upon ultimate symbols.

In the case of the Vietnam vets, proximate symbols that were meaningful in peaceful America lost their meaning in war-torn Vietnam. Upon return to the States those symbols remained devoid of life-affirming and connecting vitality. Because of this lack of viable proximate symbols the vets experienced difficulties in employment and social relations. In other words they had difficulty holding a job and getting along with other people. Ultimate symbols provide meaning for the experience of existential/transcendent limits or boundaries. Difficulty with ultimate meanings can lead to suicide and other self-destructive behaviors. This of course, was seen in many of the vets. To say "life is meaningless" is a negative statement concerning ultimate meanings.

Human freedom is found in the capacity to re-symbolize. The *process* of this re-symbolization is what we mean by *transcendence*. The *practice* of this re-symbolization is what we mean by *spirituality*.

Re-symbolization occurs in response to experiences of limit or boundary. In the field approach the divine pole is where we indicate the sense of mystery that always lies beyond the boundaries or limits in our lives. Re-symbolization--transcendence and spirituality--is a function of this pole. The authors agree with Lifton that symbolization is the driving force in the individual. We said above that symbolization is what fuels the dynamism of the field. If Lifton is correct then it is the divine pole that is of central importance in human life. It is the location of human freedom. It is in this pole that we encounter mythic-symbolic language.

We have identified two main types of symbolic meanings: proximate and ultimate. We said that the proximate is based upon the ultimate. We also said that proximate meanings are concerned with practical functioning. Ultimate meanings derive from the dimension of mythic symbolism rather than the dimension of practical functioning. It is to mythic symbols that we turn when there is a need for re-symbolization or transcendence. These symbols are largely communicated through the social pole as traditions. A *meaning tradition* communicates symbols of ultimate meanings. It is our meaning tradition that orients us in terms of the three primal interpretations mentioned in the description of the divine pole given in our description of the field. A contemporary example of a meaning from such a tradition would be that success in life is measured by accumulation of wealth. This symbolic meaning is not practical per se. It does not direct you as to *how* to accumulate wealth. A *behavior tradition* (proximate, practical symbols) based upon that meaning tradition might provide a symbolic meaning such as "steal from others to accumulate wealth and be a success."

THREE FUNCTIONS OF SYMBOLS

As identified by Lifton symbols serve our lives in three main functions. They are: connection, movement, and integration.

1. Connection refers to the establishment of meaningful symbolic relations to the various poles of the field. The field *is* the human and so there is always an attempt to symbolically respond to each pole. In the case of the Vietnam vets there was a symbolic separation in the social pole. The vets were not sharing symbols with the Americans who had not gone to Vietnam. The absence of meaningful symbolic connections to this pole resulted in the vet's social isolation, estrangement, or alienation.

Individuals feel connected to themselves, others and the world via symbols. A feeling of separation or alienation is at the same time a demand for transcendence or re-symbolization. The individual must creatively devise different symbolic meanings that connect them with themselves, others or nature. For instance, in the case of disease and illness the person experiences an interruption in previously taken for granted health. Previous symbolic patterns of coping are now brought into question as the individual is confronted with a boundary. The limit of the disease or other holocaust experience forces a separation from commonly accepted, life-motivating symbols. The stress of illness demands new, more potent and ultimate forms of symbolization. In addition to ultimate symbols, proximate adaptation in the context of disease and pragmatic disability demands other practical forms of symbolic direction.

2. Movement refers to the process of symbolic growth, development and change. When faced with symbolic separation from a pole of the field, or when our actions do not mesh with the symbolic meanings there is a demand for *adaptation*. When the vets returned home they were in a state of symbolic separation and disintegration. The symbols that connected them to other Americans had not maintained their integrity. The vets had to adapt their symbolic meanings such that they could both rebuild connection to other Americans and salvage their integrity. As Lifton discovered, there were many different types of adaptational movement depending upon the person. The symbolic function of movement points to the fact that the human is a type of being that is always growth oriented. The human is always oriented towards transcendence, or going beyond where he or she is at present. We always encounter boundaries and limits--little holocausts--and so there is always a demand for symbolic movement.

3. Integration or integrity refers to participation in ethical or moral aspects of human life. It is the embodiment in action of symbolic meanings. Integration has a back and forth quality. The person is involved with a symbolic meaning that orients behavior. When the person acts out that behavior it, in turn, illuminates the meaning of the symbol. When the vets initially went to Vietnam they were acting out of symbolic meanings of "freedom," "fighting Communism," "keeping the world safe for democracy," etc. When they acted upon, or embodied these symbolic meanings the action altered the meanings of the symbols. The action of killing and of burning villages was profoundly disturbing. It lacked integrity. It seemed unethical and immoral. It resulted in a *disintegration* of the symbol-meaning-behavior relationship.

LIFTON: FAILED ADAPTATION AND NUMBNESS TO SYMBOLIC MEANING

Human health and adaptation proceeds if we retain connection, integration and movement in relation to symbolic meanings. Failed symbolization occurs if the person experiences separation, disintegration or stasis. These states represent a kind of living death. This is what we referred to above as "numbness." Numbness in this sense is a state of powerlessness and desensitization to symbolic meanings that would foster and encourage feelings of life-filled and life-affirming vitality.

In the state of numbness there is a cessation of symbolic functions. The human-as-field becomes a closed, diseased system. Numbness represents failed symbolization. It is a basic human defense to extreme limits such as stress, undigested change or traumatic experience. Our psychic energies contract when threatened with loss or boundary. We separate from one or more poles of the field. This is a normal response and is usually followed by rapid recovery and re-connection. It is abnormal and becomes "numbness" if this recovery is delayed or blocked as was seen in the Vietnam vets. Often though, we simply *refuse* the demands of growth because of denial and fear. This is often seen in people we say are cynical, bitter or closed-minded. In such a case numbness is the way the person normally deals with life. It is an indication of a very deep, pervasive sickness.

Numbness results in a pervasive desensitization to symbolic meanings and an inability to transcendently construct new meanings. This may be caused by psychological trauma or crises such as is found in the case of illness as boundary experience. Numbness is facilitated by symbolic impoverishment in the culture or a lack of

interpersonal support and confirmation. It may also result from a consequence of illness or major psychiatric syndrome such as psychosis or depression.

The processes of connection, integration and movement should be on-going in human life. They are the processes that indicate an active symbolic life. The experiences of "holocaust survivors" studied by Lifton express extreme views of these processes. Their experience of numbness was also extreme, but many individuals do, in fact, live their day to day lives in this state. Persons suffering from medical illness are notable examples. In contemporary society there has been a loss or breakdown in mythic symbolic language and so a loss of movement or symbolic adaptability.

DYNAMICS OF THE HUMAN: SUMMARY

The human-as-field is always dynamic, in movement, change and flux. Utilizing Lifton's findings we say that it is symbolic meanings that fuel or drive the dynamism of the field. This dynamism has three main components: connection, movement, and integrity. We are always in a state of growth or movement. We always seek to connect our experiences with each of the four poles. We must always maintain harmony between our symbolic meanings and our actual behaviors. The use of symbolization as the driving force in humanity is inclusive in that it allows us to observe each pole of the field on its own terms without reducing the functions of one pole to another. It is expansive in that it allows us to re-appropriate aspects of lived human experience such as the divine pole that have been ignored by the Cartesian approach.

Whenever we encounter anything, be it object, event or person it is much more than a mere stimulus. It is a meaningful symbol to which we respond. Pre-human creatures are bio-genetically programmed to react to stimuli. The symbolic meanings with which we operate are able to function in the human as do instincts in lower animals, *yet they also provide a small degree of freedom in that symbolic meanings are always able to be reinterpreted.* A symbol is much more than a mere stimulus. It is a *meaning* to which we respond and upon which we base our actions. Symbols are the foundations upon which are built our values and our behaviors. It is during the demand for reinterpretation that we encounter human spirituality and transcendence. The demand for reinterpretation is present in every encounter with boundary or limit and so is encountered everyday.

CONSTRUCTING THE FIELD PART I: ADRIAN VAN KAAM

So far, our endeavor to discover the field has brought us two main ideas. 1) The human and the world is an intimately connected whole. It is not the encounter between two separate, independent entities. 2) It is through meaningful symbols that we forge the connection between human and world. This "drive to symbolization" is the very foundation of the human and is indicated by the all-pervasive presence of symbols in all human endeavors and activities. As a "drive" it entails functions of movement or growth, and presents a demand for integrity between our behaviors and our symbolic meanings; between thought and action.

We were puzzled though on how we could possibly picture these ideas. This was a problem similar to the difficulty of picturing the findings of quantum physics in other

than mathematical terms (which, by the way, are symbols). After all, we were searching from within the Cartesian world view; a view of reality that intuitively separates and isolates. I don't really *see* any connection between myself and the world. I "see" myself as totally independent of you, a tree, the stars, etc. But then we came across the writings of Adrian van Kaam.

Adrian Van Kaam in his four volumes on *Formative Spirituality* has developed a field model of the human in considerable detail. Van Kaam has undertaken the monumental task of devising a "science" of the human-as-field. Van Kaam's interest in the field approach began with his tenure at Brandeis University when the field school was emerging. This school was prominent in the late 1950's and early 1960's as an alternative to the prevailing forces of psychoanalysis and behaviorism. The field school understood the human as a product of a field of forces. Human life was directed by a field or matrix of forces. The confluence of these forces served to produce human behavior and moods. This Brandeis group was largely responsible for this revolutionary idea. Instead of linear forces of causality the human was subject to multiple dimensions of influence: the field.

Also prominent at this time was the Gestalt group which also saw the human as a field, but in slightly different ways. For the Gestalt group the field was more pliable. The person could influence the field. Instead of being a product of these forces, the human could change them by interaction. The Gestalt model was more consistent with Existentialism which emphasized human freedom and the ability to influence our environment. Van Kaam's interest in field theory is derived from the time he spent at Brandeis studying these ideas. He opted for a hybrid between the field school and Gestalt models. He developed a field model which stressed the person's ability to both direct and receive direction from all dimensions of the field.

Van Kaam posits that the human must always give and receive form in each pole of the field, and responds to proximate and ultimate "directives" to meaning. (This is similar to Lifton who describes the processes of giving and receiving form although not in a field model.) So, for instance, when you decorate your house you give form. Your choice of the picture is directed by proximate and ultimate symbolic meanings. When the picture you hung falls on your foot you receive form. The human must always maintain the conviction of form potency--that at least potentially they are able to give and receive form. Central to the maintenance of form potency is the relation of the individual to the mystery beyond boundary and limit.

Van Kaam's extensive writings indicate many of the ramifications of the field approach. The field approach is certainly not a simple re-working of Cartesian ideas. The poles of the field are not something we *have*, it is what we *are*. What would you think, and how would you feel if you saw a group of people ready to sacrifice a virgin to placate the god of a volcano? Generations from now, when the field approach is the accepted view of reality, the Cartesian approach might appear in a similar way!

According to van Kaam there is one main guideline for human behavior which he calls *consonance*. This would correspond to Lifton's idea of integrity. Consonance is the hallmark of any dynamic system. It means a "sounding together of the parts." For instance, our solar system is composed of parts such as planets, moons, and the sun. All the parts must "sound together" for the system to exist and maintain through time.

This is also true for the human-as-field. The "parts," the poles, must sound or fit together harmoniously. They must be consonant or in metaxic balance with each other. According to van Kaam it is the search for and maintenance of consonance that drives the human. It is to this end that we give and receive form.

According to van Kaam our lives are a constant search for total consonance or what we are calling metaxy. Whenever we feel such things as irritation, frustration, unpleasantness, boredom, any need for change it is an expression of the need for and drive to consonance (Lifton's demand for movement). These things that express the lack of consonance are experiences of boundary or limit. Given the fact that we are limited and finite the search for total consonance is increasingly an issue of transcendence, spirituality and reinterpretation of meaningful symbols.

Dissonance increases in the field because of what van Kaam calls "downward" transcendence. This is the result of a lack of skills or development of spirituality. Downward transcendence is similar to the concept of imbalance or failure of metaxis. It is the failure of the human-as-field to realize meaning and fulfillment. It is the hallmark of the closed self.

The human-as-field is always in a state of dynamic flux. In Robert Lifton's terms there is always a need for movement, connection and integration. These are ways of understanding the on-going dynamic flux or movement of the field. However, this flux may or may not be conducive to human health. When it is not it is similar to van Kaam's "downward" transcendence or Lifton's "numbness." Symbolic movement must push at our boundaries and limits. It must not move within the field as a "closed" system. The need for transcendence is also a need to expand the field through new mythic-symbolic meanings or re-interpretation of symbolic meanings.

We can picture this as follows. When we transcend through interpretation we push at the "boundaries" of the field. The field "expands." The experience of meaning and vitality is enhanced. Downward transcendence could be pictured as a "shrinking" field. There is still movement and flux, but it is not conducive to growth or health. The processes of metaxis and renewal central to the healthy human are impaired. An example would be the person who is classified as set in his ways or closed-minded. This person still symbolizes, but the field does not expand. There is no re-symbolization or re-interpretation. In Lifton's terms there is no movement. Because of this there is a gradual, increasing loss of consonance or metaxic balance. It is the image of the person becoming increasingly bitter and angry with old age. That anger and bitterness results from an inability to symbolically integrate the experiences of boundary and limit in the face of life's cruelties and injustice.

Downward transcendence does not push "into" the mystery. It takes as foundational the symbolic meanings themselves rather than the underlying invisible structure that allows for the possibility of symbolic meaning, and hence the possibility of re-symbolizing or re-interpreting. It sees the symbols as inviolate. It is the field closed in upon itself. The human experiences spiritual impoverishment. As we shall see in coming chapters spiritual impoverishment leads to ill health, difficulties in recovery from illness, and a lessening of the individual's feelings of fulfillment.

CONSTRUCTING THE FIELD PART II: WILLIAM THOMPSON

We were quite excited reading van Kaam's works in spite of our disagreement with significant points in his approach. What intrigued us most was the very idea of the human-as-field. Our minds raced as we began to apprehend various ramifications that would result from viewing the human-as-field as opposed to the human-as-machine. And yet, we were also disappointed. Could van Kaam's ideas simply be mere speculation? Wishful thinking? Many of the ramifications we were considering were not addressed in his work. He had opened the door, but not completely. In the light that seeped through the partially opened door we saw the need for further differentiation. We knew this move would be counter-intuitive. Our fear centered on the question of whether by such a move could we reach a new, real and practical understanding of the human? Was it possible to truly "see" reality based upon and through the paradigm of the field? Would this approach be valid? Would it articulate reality in an accurate manner? Would the field model have practical applications?

Our excitement mounted as we found a pertinent book from a surprising quarter. One of us was reading a work in Catholic theology from a professor at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh. In this theological work we found the following passage:

"four cardinal dimensions of our common human life: (1) relation to the Divine, (2) our vision and praxis as individuals, (3) our network of social relationships, ranging from the more interpersonal kinds of family, marriage, and friendship, to the less personal kinds characteristic of larger political, economic and cultural environment, and (4) our relationship to the natural environment and our very material body which positions us within this ecological habitat.

"[I]t seems that every human being is an intersection between these four poles. There is a kind of quaternion structure to our human existence. Furthermore, it seems as if the poles are interrelated, so that oscillations in any one of the poles seem to reverberate upon the others. "

This added an important confirmation to our questions. It also offered a simpler field model, a corrective of the more complicated Van Kaamian model. Thompson's four pole model, furthermore, was based upon the rigorous historical research of Eric Voegelin. This gave important credibility and validity to the four dimensional paradigm.

The four poles of the field cannot be properly understood as four "things" or independent areas. While the poles are distinct, one from the other, in some respects they are best understood as having a dialogical relationship. As Thompson notes, "if something will be askew in one of the poles, the probability is that something will be askew in the other poles too. Conversely, healthiness, in one of the poles will contribute toward healthiness of all of the poles."

Central to Thompson's thought is the essential human longing for transcendent meaning. There is always present in the human a certain degree of unrest or longing. For Thompson this basic unrest can only be satisfied by an experience of the Beyond, that is, the often ignored divine pole. The inherent human longing or unrest is directly related to the encounter with boundary. Reason is limited and unable to adequately address and satisfy this unrest or longing. "Pneumopathology" is the obstruction or failure to find an adequate transcendence, meaning or order in life. Pneumopathology,

while being related to the divine pole results in practical consequences. The poles of the field are always intimately related. They dialogue. A problem in one pole will necessarily impact the other three. Some forms of pneumopathology were outlined in classical literature. Heraclitus spoke of "men living in the illusionary private worlds of their imaginations." Aeschylus spoke of the disease of madness as related to similar processes. Plato wrote at length of the disease of the soul, lost in the imaginary world. The soul disconnected from the Beyond was a soul in disorder. The Stoics developed the concept of alienation, a form of pneumopathology or madness.

Similar to Lifton's and van Kaam's thought, Thompson posits that the human can respond positively to this unrest or can close off the psyche and respond negatively. The positive response pushes "into" the mystery. It does not regress to more primitive ways of ordering the world and giving meaning to it. The positive response implies an ongoing, open, active search for greater order and meaning. The negative response or "agnoia," closure of the self, becomes the fertile ground for madness, disorder and lack of meaning. The self closed to open searching becomes the perverted self. In a later chapter we will develop this concept of agnoia, or closure of the self, in terms of a discussion of narcissism. For Thompson the closure of the self to the mystery of reality leads to an acute loss of metaxic balance. Cartesianism, as an exclusive world view, encourages this loss of balance. A vertigo of egocentricity, obsession and "perversion" ensues.

PROGRESS IN SYMBOLIZATION: ERIC VOEGELIN

From Thompson we received an extra added bonus--an introduction to the work of Eric Voegelin. Voegelin, like Heidegger, van Kaam, Thompson and Lifton, is a contemporary. All of these gentleman have lived and worked in this century. Only Heidegger and Voegelin are dead, and then only relatively recently. It is from Voegelin that we derived our sense of the direction or goal of the human-as-field. Lifton provided us with the dynamics of symbolization. Voegelin provided us with the developmental, growth-oriented direction of those dynamics.

Voegelin was a philosopher who wrote a multi-volume work entitled *Order and History*. His was a unique vision of historical development. Contemporary people often fail to realize that people through time have understood their pasts quite differently than we do today. There are many ways to gain an understanding of history other than the memory of specific dates. Voegelin understood and ordered history not according to dates, but to changes in symbolic approaches to reality. That is, changes in *consciousness* which he called "differentiations." He found common tendencies in the human quest for symbolic connection and order. These tendencies that Voegelin noticed in various cultures also can be seen on the level of the individual. Voegelin agreed with Plato's dictum that society is man writ large. That is, a society reflects the quality of the individuals from which it is composed.

Voegelin, like Thompson and van Kaam, also employed a model of the human as a quaternity or four-fold structure. Human life is always a dialogue between these four structures; what we call the poles of the field. Voegelin understood this quaternion structure as constituting the human and as the four basic dispositions of being. The four fold structure of human reality was, for Voegelin, self evident in history and as such irreducible. The human was always bound relationally to the poles, embedded in

this structure. To escape or ignore this relational embeddedness would be to falsify the life process.

Central to Voegelin's work was his understanding of consciousness which is quite similar to Heidegger's idea of *dasein*. Human consciousness is always *of* something, in Heidegger's terminology we are the "there-being." We are always *there*, conscious of a world of events. Voegelin's understanding of history was in terms how our consciousness *organized* the four-fold structure of our lived experience. For instance, a *dasein* type of creature (which we as humans are) orders or organizes its consciousness of events-in-the-world through its symbolic interpretations of those events. In terms of the four-fold structure we can "pay attention" by means of these symbols to only one pole, to all the poles, or certain combinations of the poles. Whenever our symbolic interpretations change our sense of the order or organization of reality also changes.

Voegelin noticed this process in the symbolic organization of the quaternion structure by studying the history of particular cultures. He called this process "differentiation." A differentiation occurs when an aspect of reality that was previously not noticed or clearly understood is highlighted or illuminated. So, for instance, the Newtonian-Cartesian world view can be understood as a type of differentiation that notices the mechanistic aspects of reality. We today now organize most of the events of reality according to this mechanistic symbolic ordering of events.

Voegelin noticed three great leaps of differentiation in history. He called these: the cosmological, the noetic, and the pneumatic. Each represents a basic form of symbolic organization of the events of reality. One of these three differentiations tends to take a central position in societies (and, in our view, individuals). Dependant upon unique qualities and historical situations we organize our consciousness of the world predominately within one of these three differentiations. This understanding is based upon the symbolic patterns, beliefs and rituals which orient the culture or individual to the world, themselves, others, and most importantly, the basic mystery of reality.

According to Voegelin, the original ordering of reality (the quaternion structure) was in the form of the cosmological myth. Our ancient myths were ways of explaining and organizing the cosmos. Myths allowed people to understand reality in its complexity. Myths are "compact" in that they contain understandings of each of the four poles, but without sufficient nuance. By contrast, *our* sense of reality is quite differentiated as witnessed by our many specialized areas of science. These areas of contemporary specialization explain and order only one pole at a time. Myths, on the other hand, explain all four poles at the same time. This is why they are "compact." Myths are, for us, limited in their ability to provide an adequate understanding of reality.

Cosmological ordering fails to recognize the mystery of reality as essentially beyond, unknowable or transcendent. Because of this the ancient gods are human-like, the king or Pharaoh is divine, and the earthly kingdom or realm is a mirror of the heavenly or Olympian kingdom or realm. In Voegelin's terms the cosmological view is that of earthly events and the transcendent mystery being "consubstantial." In mythic orderings of reality there isn't a sufficient differentiation between the two.

The breaking of the cosmological consubstantiality and the differentiation between real events and the transcendent mystery behind those events is a result of the *noetic* ordering of experience. We would recognize the noetic as "reason" or "science." It was this symbolic movement to which we are heirs and is epitomized by the three Greeks upon whom much of the Western way of life is based: Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. The Greeks moved away from explanatory myths about gods by the power of question. They took nothing for granted, but applied reason. Reality was no longer seen as some vast living, intimately interconnected thing. The application of reason brought a different interpretation of events than those provided by the ancient myths. It destroyed the gods and replaced magic with rudimentary science.

Through noetic differentiation we get our first glimpse of the mystery of reality. Reality was now divided into two. There is a realm that reason might not penetrate, that is inherently beyond reason, or unknowable. We today are still largely noetically inclined. Cartesianism is a noetic world view.

The third great differentiation of reality concerns itself with whatever is beyond reason; this other realm we call the mystery. Voegelin called this change the *pneumatic*. The pneumatic dawned with the rise of Judaic monotheism and continued through Christianity and Islam. The Jews introduced the idea of "revelation." Reason can not penetrate this mysterious realm even though it is the use of reason that illuminates this realm. Revelation is when the mystery penetrates us with insight, intuition etc. It essentially expresses the shift of attention from human reason as central to reality to the mystery as central to reality. Our field approach in many ways understands human growth as the attempt to move from noetic to pneumatic organizations of human life and reality.

With the advent of noetic thinking the mystery of reality becomes apparent. It becomes a separate realm; in Plato's thought quite independent of our world and never to be penetrated by human reason. The dawning of pneumatic thought emphasizes the role of this mystery in human life. For the Jews it was God--the center of all human life. Though this mystery could not be comprehended by reason it could reveal itself, but it always remains mysterious and rather incomprehensible. The author's agree with the centrality and importance of this mystery for human health and fulfillment. We do not, however, offer any opinions on the truth or falsity of revelation.

It is important to avoid a linear understanding of Voegelin's study of differentiations. Each respective differentiation was not in the sense of history always getting better and better, finally arriving at the great breakthrough of modernity. Cultures (and individuals) often backslide in their differentiations of reality. (Given this we might question whether modern culture is really all that advanced!) We should, for example, avoid speaking of cosmological differentiation as "primitive," as though it were to be simply left behind by further advances. The cosmological view is a legitimate view of reality (the quaternity). In some ways its "compactness" can illuminate reality (thus providing greater differentiation) as we shall see in a later chapter when we discuss the importance of myths.

Voegelin's historical studies of human civilizations provided the authors with a metatheory for human growth. His view of the human emphasizes the meaning of a

deeper mystery and pneumatic symbolizing. Discussing Voegelin the Carmodys write:

"The goal of human questioning, if one burrows into it deeply enough, is...the first cause or reason that might 'explain' reality as a whole. Nothing less than this will satisfy the profound human inquirer, will quiet the restlessness of the authentic questioner.

"Thus any thorough description of human questioning, human searching for meaning and order, makes it plain that reality takes on the character of a deepening mystery...Mystery, it soon becomes clear, is the best name for 'reality,' and *mystery does not mean the absence of light or intelligibility but the surplus or excess*. The reason our intellectual quest is ongoing is that, for every insight we gain, every problem we solve, a dozen more questions and problems arise."

Differentiation is a response to problems inherent in developing an organized understanding of reality such as in times of boundary and limit, or when a disturbing question is raised. This is true not only for whole cultures, but for individuals as well. Reality always takes on the character of a deepening mystery for the questing, growing human. This mystery is illuminated through cosmological, noetic and pneumatic differentiations. The cosmological view sees the oneness of reality, but fails to differentiate. Reason certainly illuminates many aspects of reality, including its mysteriousness, but there are inevitable limits to reason's ability to penetrate into this mystery. Reason though, is vital. It keeps the quaternion structure of our lives firmly within view. This is of paramount importance as we try to live pneumatically--centered on the mystery. Our reason keeps us from ignoring the real events of the world such as needs for social justice. It keeps us from just "floating off" into pneumatic awareness of the mystery. This "floating off" is apparent among some people who don't seek needed medical attention because "God will provide."

The human is always a creature "in-between." In-between our symbolic interpretations of events, and the mystery of reality that goes beyond those events. In-between the four poles of the field. In-between explanatory myths, reasoned understanding, and awareness of the unknowable mystery. This always being in-between demands the maintenance of balance. Voegelin is the scholar who recaptured the Platonic term "metaxis" to indicate this necessary balance.

FOUNDATIONS OF THE FIELD MODEL: SUMMARY

In the preceding discussion we have cited some of the main influences for our development of the field approach to the human. Van Kaam's field model and formative spirituality provided a much needed alternative vision of the human. From him we owe much of our original inspiration. Our revision of the human as a four pole dynamic field has been based largely upon the work of Eric Voegelin and William Thompson. Voegelin's historical studies indicate to us that all human experience universally and foundationally is expressed in four main ways: physically, socially, psychologically and spiritually. Thompson agrees with and further developed Voegelin's ideas.

Interest in what we call the divine pole provides a corrective to our Cartesian influenced understandings of the world and of the human. As we shall see later, the human is always encountering this "mystery" beyond our boundaries and limits especially in times of suffering, disease and threat of death. The Cartesian approach has ignored this encounter with mystery. Concern with this mystery leads us to an understanding of the centrality of interpretation or hermeneutics in human life. Faced with encounter with the mystery the human must always interpret the meaning of this mystery. We interpret by means of symbols.

The human-as-field is always dynamic and in flux. We always search for total consonance or metaxis through the giving and receiving of form to each of the four poles. The basis for this dynamism is the drive towards symbolization. Symbolization, the perception of meaning, interpretation is *the* driving force of the human. It is especially important during encounter with boundary or limit and the mystery that lies beyond that limit.

THE END RESULT OF THE HUMAN-AS-FIELD: METAXIS

Voegelin's exhaustive study of world history led him to conclude that the four pole model was irreducible and fundamental. Metaxis became Voegelin's central organizing principle. Metaxis involved a constant and delicate search for balance between the four dimensions of the human world. Human life, history, and civilization could be understood in terms of metaxis and the four pole field. In spite of the changes of history, in spite of the on-going rise and fall of cultures and civilizations, two trends continued through human history: an ever deepening recognition of and appreciation for the mystery of reality, and an on-going quest, first articulated by Plato, for metaxis.

Voegelin interpreted Platonic thought as containing one central motif: Plato's understanding of health and fulfillment as metaxy, the "in between" or "midpoint." Metaxis is the balance between the mystery beyond human limit (including the limit of reason) and the lived human world. On a broader level, metaxy referred to a balance between all aspects of human life: physical, psychological, social and spiritual. Metaxy was a certain harmony between opposing elements in the field of life (e.g. self/society, divine/self, nature/society ...). Voegelin framed his model of the human within Plato's concept of metaxy or balance. Metaxic balance then, first described by Plato, was the central concept in Voegelin's field model of the human.

Thompson too is concerned with metaxis as the "in between" or "midpoint." In Thompson's discussion of the "Kingdom" proclaimed by Jesus he notes:

"[T]he creative tension in Jesus' message and work between the 'already' and the 'not yet.' The Kingdom is already: the transcendent power of the universal love is establishing a beachhead within history in the form of a community which breaks through human alienation and oppression. But the Kingdom is not yet: this new community of love is also an object of future hope,...it has not yet fully occurred. Jesus and all of us are caught in the 'In-Between,' as Eric Voegelin would put it."

Though Thompson is writing as a Catholic theologian we can apply this to our own universally human situation. He continues to explicate this in-betweenness as a

"creative tension" between pessimism and utopianism. That is, a tension between our social and individual search for total justice, happiness and fulfillment, and our giving up in despair of ever reaching these ideals. We *do* find some hints or degrees of true social justice and true personal fulfillment *today*. Yet we also look to tomorrow to complete or maximize these hints, or to bring about such ideals and desires in their fullness. We are in-between *knowing* through our own experience that justice and fulfillment are possible and *hoping* that in the future we will experience them in their totality. It is from within the creative tension of being "in-between" that we search for the proper *balance* between the (unrealistic?) desire for utopia, and the inclination to give up our hope of ever attaining complete justice and fulfillment. This demand for balance is what is meant by "metaxis." Metaxis is the optimal balance demanded by our being "in-between."

We too have chosen the concept of metaxis to ground our approach to the health, healing, growth and development of the human-as-field. It is the search for metaxis that is the guiding image of the creative artist, the mystic or the mythological hero in search of the "Holy Grail." In reference to human encounter with boundary and limit it refers to the recovery of formative-symbolic vitality and meaning. Metaxis refers to harmony or ecological balance in the four pole field. Human existence is lived out through dialogical relations. Relationships between all dimensions of the ecological field must be balanced. The most important balance is between the secular and transcendent dimensions. This is the balance between the mystery beyond and the empirical human world. In addition to metaxis the contemporary Cartesian influenced person is in need of recovery. Recovery is a metaphor descriptive of re-awakening and re-vitalizing the experience of symbolic meaning.

Recovery is especially important for us today as we search for the proper metaxis in our personal lives and in our social institutions. We have allowed ourselves to backslide in terms of our development as a species. We have truly failed to learn from history and have failed to grow in those areas that make us distinctive animals. The areas of human accomplishment that would aid us have stagnated and largely ceased to communicate their very real, human message. The area of human life we are talking about here is called "spirit." So debased has this dimension of our lives become that we often fail to know exactly what it is that we are talking about when we use such a word. Indeed, many of us think that the word doesn't mean anything--that it is somehow related to magic and superstition. It is not. The existence of the human spirit and the art and discipline of its growth and development is the key to metaxis.

The modern world has lost sight of the human as "in-between" the totality of our yearnings for social justice and personal fulfillment, and the inclination to disparage these yearnings as unattainable fantasies. Concurrent with this loss of proper vision has come a loss of the proper creative tension between our desire for utopia and the temptation of despair. We lose our balance, we lose metaxis.

As the scientific image of the human has increasingly become disconnected from the four pole field, as it has become increasingly reduced to the mere physical, so too has there been a loss of the necessary metaxic balance. Cartesianism in particular has served to sever the connection to the transcendent aspects of human life wherein lie the tools to be used by us "in-between" creatures. Modernity is intoxicated with

empirical knowledge. Given this orientation we have to say that the mystery beyond our boundaries and limits is unknowable and non-empirical. The Age of Reason and the prevailing scientific methodology have discredited the familiar religious languages that allowed past generations to make some sort of sense of this mystery. The modern inability to meaningfully discuss issues of spirituality, transcendence, and the mystery beyond our boundaries and limits has led to spiritual pathology. The horrors of the post-modern world--wars, pollution, the threat of nuclear extinction--are macro results of the loss of balance occurring on the micro level of the individual.

The evil and destruction of the modern world is a vivid example of the results of this spiritual pathology. The Nazis arose out of the disorder following World War I. Their quest for meaning and order took on distinctively magical/cosmological overtones. Their move backwards was an example of pneumopathology, numbness and downward transcendence. It could be compared to an individual who regresses when faced with severe trauma. We return to an earlier meaning. A traumatized adult may regress all the way back to infantile behavior. A society may regress to "volkish" mysticism and genocidal human sacrifice.