



Bridge of Orders

A Pathway to Abstraction

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As thinking evolves it must necessarily become more abstract. On this journey, however, it is almost inevitable that we hit a ‘thought wall’ imposed by language structure. This is a core premise of physicist David Bohm in his book, ‘Wholeness and the Implicate Order’. (Bohm 1980)

Bohm argues that our common use of language, where the object (noun) is predominant and action (verb) occurs to objects, enforces a thinking that is ‘object-oriented’ and is infused with the concept of time ordering. In this thinking modality all aspects (things) of the phenomenal world are understood as static objects that can be decomposed and classified into ever smaller parts, and then “*reconstructed according to our observations into manageable scenarios*” (Bohm 1980).

The result is a fragmented world view and a dimming of perception:

“... for fragmentation is now very widespread, not only through society, but also in each individual; and this is leading to a kind of general confusion of the mind, which creates an endless series of problems and interferes with our clarity of perception so seriously as to prevent us from being able to solve most of them”. (Bohm 1980)

To overcome this at societal scale, Bohm proposes that we change our thinking by creating a new mode of language where:

“movement is to be taken as primary in our thinking and in which this notion will be incorporated into the language structure by allowing the verb rather than the noun to play a primary role. (Bohm 1980)

Bohm thus argues for cognition based on the perception of a ‘dynamic’ rather than on static object decomposition. But what is moving? And how? Here, Bohm introduces the notion of an ‘Implicate Order’ where “*the unbroken wholeness of the totality of existence as an undivided movement without borders*” (Bohm 1980) is enfolded and operating.

In 1919 Robert T. Browne published “*The Mystery of Space*” introducing a magnificent abstraction, the notion of ‘Space-Mind’ - the notion that Space itself is the Universal Mind, the Life Force. It is not that Life is contained in Space but is pure dimensional Space. Borrowing from Browne we can argue that Bohm’s reference to ‘movement’ is indeed a reference to the Life Force continually moving from a Unity aspect to a Manifest Physical aspect. Per Browne, “Space, as Life, is indivisible”, i.e., an unbroken wholeness.

In sum, both books point to humanity’s goal: The ability to perceive the Life Force implicated in, and at play in the present, in all the seemingly disparate parts of the phenomenal world. This is the ultimate abstraction and both authors raise the imperative to develop a new modality of thought to sense that abstraction. But how do we make the leap to a new thinking modality when our understanding of the goal is formed by a modality that simply cannot perceive an “*unbroken Wholeness*”? For here there are no objects for the existing modality to grasp onto, to decompose into ever smaller pieces, as we are accustomed. (“Hello Wall”) Where Bohm proposes that we evolve our perception by changing our mode of language, Browne counsels to consciously develop abstract thinking as part of day-to-day living, to be ‘*sympathetic to the notions*’, to strive toward subtlety. Evolving thought is difficult, and evolving thought at a societal scale is extremely difficult.

This is where a third ‘book’, the practice of Qualitative Geometric Form Study, comes into play. From the ancient Greek philosophers to modern theorists like R. Buckminster Fuller, the language of fundamental Geometric form was the foundation to reliably base thought upon. Geometric form study, more specifically, the study of 3D Geometric form as it grows in buildout, provides tangible insight into how Nature physicalizes (or to paraphrase Plato, how “God geometrizes continually”). I argue that dynamic form study is much more insightful than the study of static Geometric pattern. Measurements or classifications are not important here – in a buildout it is simply about first-hand observation of Nature’s organizing principles (i.e., ‘the how’) in operation. This is the bridge from sensing the physical to sensing the non-physical. Geometric form study gives us a tangible frame of reference (‘training wheels’) that helps us grasp more subtle levels of abstraction. It is as if this reference makes abstractions seem more like objects so that our common Time Order thinking can work with them. When we can perceive and think in both the realm of Time Order and the realm of Implicate Order we become ‘Bi-Modal’ thinkers, and the ‘Wall’ vanishes.

Dynamic 3D Geometric modeling is a powerful, indispensable tool for evolving thought.