

## ORGANICISM: A "MORE HOLISTIC" EXPLANATION

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The problems of the one and the many, of a whole and its parts, and of sameness and difference continue to plague human thinking in endless ways. Mastery of them would be a major human achievement. One difficulty with all of them is a tendency to regard their negativity as exclusive rather than as complementary. When opposition between one and many, a whole and its parts and sameness and difference, each of which is not the other, is interpreted as contradictory, what is common to both of each complementary pair is ignored or denied. Then understanding how existing things actually embody both without contradiction is missing.

Attempts to explain relations between pairs of opposites have resulted in many different views, some going to extremes in subordinating one completely to the other, in asserting complete difference, in asserting absence of difference, and some modifying such extremes by subordinating one to the other partially, by asserting them to be more different than alike, or by asserting them to be more alike than different. Each of these attempts involves incomplete understanding of the nature of actual existence and results in inadequate explanation of their nature (1).

Recent developments in philosophical thinking in a movement concerned with general systems theory have been characterized by a persisting struggle in thinkers trying to escape deficiencies in merely mechanistic conceptions by adopting cybernetic feedback mechanisms with ideas of dynamic equilibrium and have advanced by demanding "more holistic" explanations to account for biological, psychological, sociological, etc., processes inadequately explainable in terms of mechanistic or cybernetic presuppositions. Without reviewing here the intricate maneuvers available in systems literature (2), I proceed directly to stating an hypothesis intended to provide the kind of more holistic explanation that seems needed.

Focusing on the problem of the interrelations of whole-parts interdependencies, I observe that a whole of parts is not its parts and the parts of a whole are not their whole and thus that negation exists between a whole and its parts, between a whole and each of its parts, and between each of the parts since each part is not any of the other parts. But none of these three kinds of negation is complete negation. For a whole of parts cannot be a whole of parts without its parts; it depends on its parts for being a whole of its parts. The parts of a whole cannot be parts of that whole without the whole of which they are parts; they depend on the whole for being parts of that

whole. Even though each part of a whole is different from every other part in being a part, it is also like every other part in being a part of that whole; its difference from other parts does not eliminate its being the same as they are in being of the same whole.

Since whole-parts interdependencies involve both negation and incompleteness of negation, is there some most basic and most general concept in terms of which we can intuitively grasp such whole-parts mutual dependence as non contradictory? I propose two interdependent ways of explaining the nature of such existence through two most general concepts, here named "organic unity" and "energy".

1. In addition to each whole and its parts and both their interdependencies and their negations of each other, there exists a larger whole, i.e., that whole inclusive of the whole which is not its parts, the parts which are not their whole, the parts which are not each other, and the complex of these negations. This larger whole has, or is, an existing unity incorporating all of the whole, the parts, and their likenesses and differences in what exists as both a unity-and-many, a wholeness involving sameness and a plurality of parts involving differences-- all without contradiction. For want of a better name, I call this explanation "organicism". The term "organic unity" is intended to connote also "organic plurality" or, better, "organic-unity-plurality".

The foregoing description of this explanation is incomplete until it becomes clear that it also attempts to account for how each whole of parts functions also as part of a larger whole, and, hierarchically, as part of a larger whole that functions as part of a still larger whole, or rather many larger wholes, and also how each part of a whole may function also as a whole of its own parts and, hierarchically, as a whole of parts which are wholes of parts which are wholes of parts, etc. The concepts of organic unity, and of organicism, thus involve a concept of existing hierarchies and many levels of negations that are incomplete and function as opposites that are complementary. My attempt to explain in detail varieties of interpretive tendencies and implications of their combined significance for a fuller grasp of the nature of organic unity has led to preparing a Diagram of Types of theories, each partial and incomplete in itself but together constituting kinds of contradictions in terms of which, by means of careful statement and partial abstraction of statements, a most fully complete statement of the nature of organic unity, and thus of organicism as an explanatory hypothesis, can be stated (3).

2. What is energy? On the one hand, nobody knows. Its nature is a complete mystery. Physicists have proposed a formula, " $E=MC^2$ ", capturing some principles for measurement. But it tells us nothing about the nature of energy itself. On the other hand, everyone knows something about what energy is. Why? Because all that exists, whether atoms, cells, minds, societies or galaxies, is constituted by energy. Energy is omnipresent. It constitutes one's own nature as well as the natures of all other things. Given this interpretation of energy, it cannot be a complete mystery. But when minds dwell on the negative aspects of energy as being all alike throughout the universe versus

energy as manifesting itself differently in each different kind of nature, problems of misunderstanding the organic unity of energy as continuous and as a whole (even universal whole) and at the same time functioning differentially in each of the many particular natures as somehow contradictory, then the nature of energy appears mysterious.

The organicist view is that energy is both one and many, both continuous and distributed, both the same everywhere in being energy and differently manifest in each different thing. To introduce any concept of excluded middle between energy as one and many, as whole and parts, as same and different is to misunderstand it. If we observe that the verbal stem in "energy" is "erg" (energy), a term commonly used in English for a unit of energy, and that the verbal stem in "organic unity" (and in organ, organism, organization) is "org", and that etymologically "erg" and "org" have a common origin, we can then also observe that, although the term "energy" has come to connote work or force or power, and that the term "organic unity" has come to connote some kind of structure, form, system or function, these kinds of connotation not only interdepend (since energy never exists in pure form but always formed or organized in some way) but are, actually, identical in existing even if distinguishable in our thinking. Given this interpretation, organicism might equally well be called "erganicism" or simply "ergism".

When we found our theory of the nature of existence (our metaphysics or foundations of philosophy of science) by recognizing that "org" and "erg", or organization and energy, are two universal aspects of the nature of existence and thus common to all existences, then we have a conceptual basis on which to build truer, more adequate, and in the language of contemporary needs, "more holistic", explanations of the nature of things. Organicism is thus proposed as another, more useful, attempt to provide a basis for accounting for "the unity of all sciences".

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#### NOTES

1. I have dealt with such attempts in detail elsewhere and will not repeat such detail here: Philosophy: An Introduction, Ch. 20. New York, Wiley, 1953. Comparative Philosophy: Western, Indian and Chinese Philosophies Compared, Ch. III, New Delhi, Vikas, 1977. "Five Types of Systems Philosophy", International Journal for General Systems, Vol. 6, 1981, pp. 233-237. "The Nature of Existing Systems", Systems Research, Vol. 3, 1986, pp. 177-184.

2. See my "Five Systems Concepts of Society", Behavioral Science, Vol. 28, 1983, pp. 204-218.

3. See my Polarity, Dialectic, and Organicity, Ch. 11. Springfield, Illinois, Charles C. Thomas, 1970; Albuquerque, World Books, 1977.