

## **CONTENT AND OPERATION (1.0.0)**

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### **1**

Thought is guided by groups of related ideas which can be explicitly known or have a silent influence. If a particular form of expression becomes habitual, thought finds itself translated into its terms at the moment of creation, at the moment we grasp at an idea, trying to form it into words. This form becomes the space into which thought enters; it becomes the structure of the terrain in which thought manifests itself—a terrain conditioned by guiding ideas engrained within thought's movement, fostering the structure into which thought expresses itself. A guiding idea opens a space for thought. It gives thought a situation in which to think, channels thought in a particular direction. It gives thought a particular movement, a movement towards a sense, towards an understanding. A guiding idea may create new possibilities of connection within thought. The space it opens can relate to other spaces in which there are other contents to engage with. It can represent the purposes that determine thought's direction, that define the terrain thought enters.

Thought takes on new meanings within a purpose. It is the situation that defines how it is valued, how it is elaborated, how it may be followed into a new space, how a new space may create new connections previously unexplored. A purpose is not always singular but several interrelated purposes can complement, support, or even contradict each other, forming not a clearly defined matrix but a fluid context in which ideas develop. This context is what purposes both create and are created by. It is a reciprocal exchange and movement of position within which thought itself is made possible.

Creative thought involves pushing forward, striving, exploration, the shifting of purposes, searching for an unknown. At first thought faces an empty darkness, but instead of turning away it can embrace this difficulty. A context can be created for thought to enter the dark and begin to struggle through dense and overgrown areas until it reaches understanding. Requiring efforts to refocus thought again and again, this is a process that sometimes unravels just as much

as it makes stable. Looking into the unknown involves points of crisis, where connections seem impossible, where problems overwhelm the idea, moments where a work's progress is made only in its critique.

Creation is at first a lack of control, a lack of certainty. It begins as the avoidance of a stable ground, as the search for a space where there is at first nowhere to stand. The difference between this and the process of reproduction, where thought duplicates pre-existing contents and movements, is that in the latter thought remains within a particular space, repeating the familiar, adopting a common formula. An existing space is utilised in the search for something available rather than for something hidden. Thought becomes a movement among the existent rather than the unseen. If there is no movement into an unknown space, if no spaces are pushed forward, thought has reached the movements of habit, where it may refine and arrange but does not venture to overcome that which determines it.

Habitual movements of thought are where a strict predefined method is followed, preordaining the outcome; where thought becomes institutionalised in its obedience to an example it follows without question; where the new immediately solidifies as a new conformity; where thought is subordinated to political divisions, to universal values understood as absolute, to values unquestioned in the historical nature of their development; where thought follows the abstractions of a cultural ideal, of a set form which serves to underpin its status; where thought is forever drawn into the spaces proven to perform commercially; where the new is understood as the commercial value of collectable, recognisable repetitions in which the marketplace is pre-empted. All these are the singular well worn paths diligently followed. They are the closed purposes where spaces are closed off, where thought becomes rigid and exploration restricted. These restrictions become systematic in determining what thought must do. But conformity can be challenged. We can see something in a new context, in a new space that sets thought off towards other directions, allowing us to think again, allowing a new thought to become operative, a thought that guides thinking towards other dimensions of its movement.

Two modes of expressing thought are the expression of thought's content, and the expression of thought's operation. The first expresses a thinking focused on itself, not in a critical self-reflexivity, but a thinking distracted from itself with itself. In its purest instances it is the unquestioned moment of thinking that simply happens, a thought focused on its own content, its own imagination, its own belief, its own outcome. The second mode, the expression of thought's operation, is the expression of what thought does. It is thought turned back on itself, focused not only on its content, but on its own movement: its connecting, fabricating, reduction and expansion, joining and separation. Thought's operation belongs to the situation in which content becomes possible. It is the relationship

between thoughts, the forms of influence they exert over each other. In expressing these relationships we depict a vision, not of the content of thought but of how thought moved. The first mode is to think without regarding what thought does. The second is to notice, to recognise, to think again a happening from within thought. It is a realism of thought's irrealism, aiming not to present a truth behind the veil of thought's appearance, but a vision and understanding of the irreal movement, a vision of thought itself rather than thought in-itself.

Content is the more familiar aspect of thought, its natural focus. Operation is rarely noticed, but its movement constitutes the spaces in which content occurs. Operation belongs to content essentially, yet the difference between them is rarely made explicit. For the most part operation is lost in content, left implicit within the dominance of content's form. But glimpses can be seen of these two aspects within thought, instances where we can focus on one over the other. An example enters thought as a content and shows how, through it, thought arrives at a new situation of connections and space. The first mode is the expression of the example; the second mode is the expression of its effect as an arrival within thought. The first mode involves linguistic thoughts expressed in language, captured, not as thought's original experience, but as repetitions of thought's immediate sense. The second mode involves linguistic relationships captured through description and metaphor. These relationships do not themselves speak but happen in the movement and connection of language. They must be represented, their expression acting like a signpost rather than a model of the thing itself.

Within thought's operation we may attempt to see what presuppositions interfere with the creative process; we may question unchallenged movements of thought, the meaning of when thought takes the shortest route, the easiest option, the consequences of adopting a purpose. It asks what does a purpose do to thought? What movements does it allow? In what channels are we restricted? For what reasons do we follow thought in a particular direction? Thought's operation allows us to understand how spaces are negotiated. It allows us to understand thought's situation: how a purpose creates spaces; how connections are fostered; how a dualism may promote or restrict progress; how a particular understanding can only follow a certain path, can only make certain connections; how predispositions influence us; how untouchable static purposes shape and define thought. For the most part thought is passed over without understanding. But through noticing itself, through the effort that brings it to an understanding of itself, thought can reflect on itself, no longer accepting its movements uncritically, no longer leaving itself unquestioned, making it necessary to explore its avenues, the other spaces where it has been left undisturbed.

When we understand creative thought, we are aware of the difference between the creation of the new and the repetition of a formula. In this under-

standing we see the difference between creation and reproduction; we see a vision of thought that guards us against the shift from creation to conformity, that shows us when thought is active rather than passive, when thought creates rather than being created.

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As we express thought according to this concept in which operation and content are distinguished, we understand it as a structure that we do not create, but see within expression itself, each side visible in actual thinking. The expression of this structure is a response rather than a construction. It does not create but sees itself, avoiding the thought that brings with it the fabrications and imaginative formation of ideas. But within the structure of this concept there is another aspect. As well as a primacy of vision, it is also pulled in another direction. Beyond the simple recognition of thought, it has another tendency towards allowing thought to construct in order to see construction as such. This tendency allows thought to operate in order to see the moments of its thinking. It allows thought to create in order to bring itself into view. It expresses thought according to the structure of content and operation in order to see the operations of thought as such.

From within the development of this concept we begin to see the moments of conceptual development in general. In this development various purposes alter its terrain, alter what it focuses on and what it leaves behind, simplifying some things while attempting to delve into the full complexity of others. As it is thought through, our concept acts as the source of an organisation of connections. It grows, operates on ideas; it becomes shaped in the context of ideas, purposes, and directions. We become aware of its proximity to other concepts that may become determinative for it. In the development of this concept, thought searches its surrounding area, looking for the ideas that share its terrain and the proper way in which it can connect with them. Its development is the exploration of a territory, of areas that interlink, ebbing and flowing into prominence as thought moves. This is a development that involves an alteration of our concept's meaning as it is brought into proximity with new possibilities of connection, where purposes allow it to go beyond mere description, allow it to live and breathe, animating the work that describes it, making each sentence comprehensible as parts of a whole.

Our concept may be shaped by a classical concept of pure reason. It may be determined by the terrain of rational thinking, by the contents and operations that rational thought requires as a distinct form. To understand our concept in this way is to shift its nature, to bring it into contact with other ideas, to shift the importance of ideas connected to it, to move it towards other purposes. Within this foundational universality knowledge becomes operative for it as a purpose.

This purpose, expressed through understanding our concept as rational, has a tendency to purify the distinction central to it. In its becoming universal the content/operation distinction becomes separated in a new way; each side becomes abstracted from the other in a distinctive movement previously unseen. The two sides become compartmentalised in order to create from them sharp distinct contents, foundational for other contents built upon them as a system. Movements of thought themselves become contents formed specifically as specimens and groups, captured in order to make them secure.

But at this point, in accord with its own logic, our concept recoils from reason, disentangles itself from it. It finds itself not within thought as such but within a certain type of thought. It finds itself exemplary only for certain movements, as abstract but inoperative, as the reflection of a motionless foundation rather than a living thought functional within its own happening. Our concept does not belong inherently to rational thought. It does not belong inherently to the ideas and purposes found through its further development within this terrain. It is not a theory, or a test or rule constructed to define thought, to define creation, to make them clear and distinct. It does not look for causes or explanations under the terms of neurological structures. It does not imply a particular universal aspect, an operation duplicated again and again in various situations and areas, tying them to definite points of reference.

As a construction of pure rational thought, our concept would be the emphasis of a particular form of operation, a confinement within particular movements. It would be a form that shapes the expression of all forms, a structure that forces divisions and connections, that understands itself as absolute rather than as a possibility of thought in general. It would be a systematic form in which the structure of its relations are posited according to a definite type of precision, where the new is understood only in terms of what offers itself as an element to supplement its existing system, and what is inoperative within the system is degraded to meaninglessness. Our concept does not create itself as a function for a specific system of thought; it would only attempt to see such a creation as a movement of thought itself. It is not involved only with a particular type of thought, but with the vision of thought's happening in general.

As our concept disentangles itself, it creates for itself another terrain, but not a singular terrain of a specific form of thought, not a enclosed area that defines according to its own properties and perspective. Leaving rationality behind as a possible path open to it, in its recoil our concept does not lose its proximity to the movements of reason, but the latter cease to be fundamentally determinative for its direction. Instead our concept returns from a single space, from a single form of thought—complex and unlimited in itself yet confined to itself as a single species; it returns to itself as a space from which multiple spaces operate.

Within this movement, this return of thought back to thinking in general, we see a specific operation that reshapes our concept. In this vision of our concept, a multiplicity of directions and areas open as the ground from which thought happens. It looks to become operative, to create the thought that it sees as movement. Not that we express just any thought, but only those relevant to our purpose, only those that relate to the area we explore, that push thought through to the paths that can operate within our chosen direction—a direction that does not become a totalisation of thought, but a direction of thought's possible operation.

As such a purpose, the development of the distinction between content and operation as a concept looks at how it becomes operative from within itself, how the concept itself creates operation. Our concept was born from the movement of thought; both sides of the distinction must happen in order for them to be what they are. Within our concept's development its natural direction is to continue itself as a movement. Operation belongs to it fundamentally as a side of the distinction that constitutes it: the operation that is the movement of contents. A particular form of the movement of contents is where movement itself is expressed as a content, not to define or fix thought, but where movement is created from the structure of the content/operation divide itself. When thought's operation becomes a content, not in the sense of a movement towards an abstract, endless regress, unthinkable and irrelevant in practice, but when its metaphorical expression becomes engrained in the movement of actual thought, it acts as a guiding idea that creates a self-reflexivity within thought's situation: the expression of what thought does becomes operative in thought's doing. In other words, as we express movements of connection and so on, they become new contents which create changes within thought—contents that are not an expression of the first mode but an expression arrived at via the second mode, a description of the movement rather than the content of imagination, a guiding thought that becomes operative, creating new movements and spaces.

In the example of creative thought, we express operation as a connection, as the search of various directions, the search for a link, the moment of a new context that creates new areas open for exploration. In this the expression of an operation of thought can become the basis of the movement towards the new. As we express the movements of creation, as they become the thought that is searched for, they create the conditions of thought's growth and development. The basis of this expression is to understand the process of thinking; it is to see what thought can do. Noticing a movement can give thought a new direction. It's expression cultivates thought without being restrained within its existing channels. Movement is the operation of thinking, but if it does not reach expression it remains unseen. If our problem is how to change thought, our answer is to bring it out of its silence.

Habitual thought repeats without questioning itself, remaining lost in the familiarity of its own settled, preorganised movement and content. When habitual thought repeats under a new context, although the content remains the same, it repeats differently. The difference in context makes the familiar unfamiliar; it creates a resistance between the content and the altered situation in which it finds itself, where the old jars against the new, where thought stumbles over itself, disrupting the possibility of it remaining unquestioned. This resistance brings thought out of its silence. It makes visible what for the most part remains closest to us yet hidden. It disrupts thought from its usual channels. Like the new physical situation in which our ideas or behaviour appear unfamiliar, to understand thought's operation is in some way to mirror this process of shifting contexts. When the operation of following a habit is expressed it becomes a content that can in turn affect thought's situation. It can inhibit itself as an operation by virtue of becoming expressed as an operation. This expression can be the turning point of its own internal context. It is to allow the expression of a movement to become a new thought, to alter the terrain of our thinking, to change our viewpoint within it.

It is the questioning of what thought does that makes it stand out, that makes it become visible rather than lost in the sense of content. Understanding operation does not simply change one particular thought; it does not counteract or oppose a specific content. It is not only another terrain, but the understanding of terrains as such. Within it we understand how the habitual speaks of its process; the operational nature of contents, the way in which they act as guiding thoughts; the structures of movement that form the foundations of thought. Awareness of operation changes the environment in which content can operate: certain deceptive movements are hampered; other movements become understood as conducive to our purposes.

Within the concept of the distinction between content and operation, thought turns towards its own self-consciousness. Not as an introspective withdrawal from the world, but to become conscious of thought within the world. It is an awareness of thought as we act, as we do things, as we are confronted with actual entities and events. Nor does this self-consciousness involve a distinct vision of thought within a state of purity. The content/operation distinction does not only represent the self-transparency of thought, but also the complexity and ambiguity of thought's happening. It is not only a vision of clarity, but also of the movements of thought's chaos. The distinction itself implies this: both sides slip into one another, slip in and out of awareness. This ambiguity belongs to the indeterminacy of actual thought; it belongs to the movements that creation happens within.

This concept attempts to create a free thought that looks into the fundamentally new spaces that lay ahead as unknowns, that looks into the void to see



if it can outline a space within it. To create the new is a distinct process opposed to the recreation of the pre-existing. But how is it that the relatively unconstrained operations of the latter appear simpler and thereby more free? The point about freedom here is not the process, but the freedom of possibility for the end result. This freedom involves extreme difficulty. It does not create within the well worn terrains already available to it, but attempts to create new directions, new turns, that cultivate the possible. To find the new is to constantly search. But this is not merely a search for a content. It involves the search for a thought that creates the situation for its own happening, that prepares the ground for itself as something to be found in thought's exploration. It is a search for the operations that allow the new to form, the operations of instinct rather than habit, the operations that force their way through difficulty rather than relying on what is present at hand.