Changing the World: A Framework for the Study of Creativity. David Henry Feldman, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, and Howard Gardner. Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1994, 175 pages, $55.00 hard, $16.95 paper.

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There is more than a tendency within the cognitive and physical sciences today to look upon the behavior of the individual as dependent upon rule governed systems that are divorced from one's intentions but which still shape the direction the consequences take. Such a view often perceives creativity as a perfunctory affair where local problems are gradually solved and things finally come together. Indeed the creative act would seem to be little more than a simple step by step modification of previous ideas based on increased information — a borrowed token of sequential processes.

It is precisely this austere view of creativity that *Changing the World* would like to amend. As the trio of authors constantly remind us, such an end-state explanation cannot plumb very far into either the depth or breadth of the creative act to explain how fresh thoughts are constructed or how a person can reject the tradition completely and generate something anew. What *Changing the World* offers instead is a more fruitful framework of study — one which will allow the field of human creativity to further grow and prosper. A perspective which sees creativity not in derivative terms — as something that merely happens, but as a dynamic expression of several sets of integrated factors operating at several levels of human activity: a *Domain Individual Field Interaction* (DIFI).

Though all the authors are steadfastly committed to the multiplicity of this new framework of study, what is beneficial about the book is that each contributor deals with or stakes out only one aspect of DIFI to show how it specifically enhances the creative process. For example in "The Fruits of Asynchrony" and "The Creator's Pattern," Howard Gardner focuses primarily on individual persons and their ability to alter encoding strategies and prototypical descriptions in a particular domain or field. In "Creativity: Proof that Development Occurs," David Henry Feldman emphasizes that creative individuals require a mastery of a knowledge domain before they can actually challenge the field and extend reality beyond itself. Finally Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi in "The Domain of Creativity" shows that both the person and domain are depended upon a broader contextual field which facilitates the development of the creative act and ultimately determines its future status.

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The reader should be aware that if one expects from this proposed framework of study a well laid out plan on what to deal with and how to proceed, they will most assuredly be disappointed. What drives *Changing the World* is primarily the perceived inadequacy of past thought and the somewhat a priori assumption that since it is impossible to ignore the reality of human creativity the developmental factor must perforce exist and must therefore be considered. This is particularly well illustrated by Feldman's response to those cognitive theorists who see the individual's primal musings as kind of a childish, first-draft step in a more involved and incremental process. What Feldman argues, and the others faintly echo, is that the creative process is an holistic process of alternating fit and development and not a cumulative phenomenon like weight; that if we look at creativity in its totality, then the spontaneous leaps of creative thought are no longer infantile outbursts, but rather efficient ways of arranging unfocused data into global schemes.

Since much of modern discourse appears to allow so little room for the reconstructive nature and transformational capabilities of the person, I confess that I find this book to be both timely in its awareness of what needs to be discussed and appropriate in its recommendation as to what direction future discourse should take. But just as every good plan seems to have some annoying snag, so there are lodged within the fabric of this proposal some bothersome areas of concern. For instance there appears to be a strong propensity in this effort to play down consciousness and see creativity in chiefly unconscious terms. It is the unconscious that is "fluid, continuous, active and generative" (p. 34). It is the unconscious that "is motivated by a natural desire to transform, to change, to make things different from the way they were" (p. 35). It is the unconscious "that has certain tendencies to destabilize structure, to break them down and render them less organized" (p. 35).

Now I have absolutely no doubt that the non-conscious part of the self is a very active affair which can take note of life experiences and respond quite creatively to them, but to see creativity itself in primarily non-conscious terms is somewhat jaundiced and regrettably leaves us with no interesting connection to the conscious manipulation of symbols. I sense that in their zest to repudiate the Piagetian notion that consciousness is the organizer and categorizer of things in accordance with a known reality, the authors appear to skirt over the fact that consciousness is not just a one-dimensional entity but rather a heterogeneous phenomenon with very diversified and often oppositional roles. Certainly human consciousness is still the place where the person must appropriately draw things together to engage the creative enterprise as a whole; the place where persons can select or ignore content in order to put things in their own terms.

I am not terribly convinced that the DIFI framework is clear or coherent enough to do the volume of work the authors favorably anticipate. It often seems that there are more questions raised in this effort than answers received. For example, when we are dealing with this tripartite division are we dealing with three dimensions of analysis or three systems of thought? Both descriptions are used throughout the book; yet they would seem to be quite different. The former is seemingly methodological and implies what aspects are required to examine creativity correctly. The latter is far more declarative and suggests an organized set of principles and ideas already in place from which to explain the creative process.

Along the same lines, do all parts of this tripartite division have equal status, or does one aspect have priority over the other? Again there seems to be some equivocation here. When I read Gardner I find creativity dependent upon the individual's ability to ignore social convention; to disrespect the status quo; to conjure up a

"fruitful asynchrony." There is a tension here; a lack of fit between the elements involved. In many ways the emergence of a creative act defies systematic connection by having no sufficient condition prior to the agent him/herself.

Yet when I read Csikszentmihalyi, I get quite a different picture. Creativity has become inherently communal; it is "not an attribute of individuals but of social systems making judgments about individuals" (p. 144). Unlike Gardner, the distinctiveness of the self, much like an atom of sodium, appears to have no intrinsic component over and above the parts of its systematic connection. Not that much different from the causal theories which DIFI wants so desperately to replace, the how discourse of social theory has become in Csikszentmihalyi's account more explanatorily significant than the why element of human motivation.

Because I have no clear idea of how these authors would answer such questions, or how the components of DIFI work together and unite, I find it difficult to heed to the beckoning call of the book and "rally behind the banner" of this tripartite approach. This is certainly not to insinuate that there is nothing worthwhile here or that the work has fallen far short of its stated objectives. On the contrary *Changing the World* makes an important contribution to prospective studies by showing us that since creativity will never reveal its true nature to a single discipline, a more dynamic, interdisciplinary approach is needed to further ferret out its secrets. As the final chapter somewhat brashly states, the book is "on the verge" of something. What I suggest this something is, somewhat more modestly, is not a coordinated framework for organizing future research but rather a sketchy blueprint or program of action for the possible extension and direction of the field.