

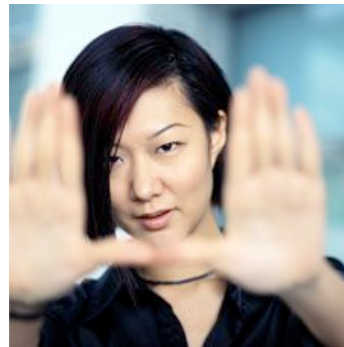
Practicing 'Dynamic Constellation': Methods for Engaging Radically Interactive Relationships

Confronting simplistic biases with the actual complexity of self, others, and the world

- ▲ Acting realistically requires re-conceiving self and world as diversified, interactive constellations
 - ▲ First we must become aware of our habitually linear, reductively delusional narratives about 'how things work'
 - ▲ Next we must 're-tell' events using concepts and practices that challenge established assumptions, beliefs, expectations
 - ▲ All types of knowledge—empirical science, theoretical logic, art, and myth—contribute to this reconfiguration of reality
- **Dynamic Constellation** is a correlation of diverse insights about interactive reality that reveal how unpredictably emergent organization configures self, work, relationships, and the world

Constellating Consciousness by Making the Leap from Exclusive to Inclusive Perspectives

Single Point Focus



Narrowing Consciousness to
> Ordinary, Exclusively Reductive Perspective <



Field Focus



Expanding Consciousness to
< Extra-Ordinary, Inclusively Non-Reductive Perspective >

**Dynamic Constellation facilitates a practice of 'opening up' one's 'frame of reference' from singular to multiple, longitudinal to lateral, exclusive to inclusive perspectives—
Revealing how Ideas and Events are Dynamical Networks**

Two Moves that Expand Understanding by Evading Habitual Reductions

Habitually reductive assumptions about 'how things work' constrain our understanding of reality—so much so that we inevitably suffer the disabling consequences of 'reductive delusion.' Thus, if we are to adapt our behaviors to the actual complexity of our selves and the world, we must engage a therapeutic expansion of awareness. There are two 'moves' to this effort: one is 'away from' simplistic perspectives and the other 'toward' notions of dynamical complexity. This shift enables us to confront the limitations of our reductive interpretations in ways that reorient our attention toward the profound interconnectivity of events, concepts, thoughts, and feelings. The resulting insights are inherently disturbing. They expose the conflicted basis of every person's beliefs and identity, illustrate the interdependency of seeming opposites, reveal the unexpected consequences of attempts to control events, and show how simplistic ideas are used to manipulate others (power and deception thrive upon reduction). The perspectives and practices of *Dynamic Constellation* prompt such awareness by revealing causes, connections, and meanings normally obscured by simplistic generalizations and mechanical models. By employing an interplay of analytical, imaginal, and experiential practices, *Dynamic Constellation* articulates life's necessarily conflicted, turbulent, unpredictably emergent ordering. These practices 'massage our minds' by activating different aspects of our intelligence in ways that 'constellate their interplay.' This cognitive stimulus enables consciousness to 'mirror' the dynamical complexity of the world around us, expanding awareness to produce unexpected meanings and new understanding. Consequently, one learns to 'tell how things happen' in ways that enable us to live more fully and act more effectively.

The 4 basic stages of *Dynamic Constellation*:

1. **Confronting habitual use of reductive concepts and simplistic expressions that suppress complex awareness**
2. **Engaging perspectives that reveal essential contrast and interactive dynamics within events, concepts, or contexts**
3. **Seeking direct experience of dynamic complexity's disjunctive self-organization and non-linear creativity**
4. **Incorporating awareness of diversity's unpredictable interactivity into one's thought, expression, and action**

Some Purposes for *Dynamic Constellation*:

- > **Expanding Awareness before Passing Judgment or Taking Action**
- > **Promoting Reflective Consideration of 'What has actually Happened and How'**
- > **Evading Assumptions and Expectations that obscure the actual operations of Interdependent Relationships**
- > **Engaging Existing Networks of Interaction more Realistically through Correspondence rather than Control**
- > **Influencing Network Dynamics by provoking Re-Constellation of their Self-Organizing Relationships**

Nothing limits complex understanding more than preference, bias, and expectation—
Fear habits more than enemies.

Re-Orientating Attention to 'Know More about What We Already Know'

Often our understanding is limited not by 'what we know' but 'how we know it.' Dynamic Constellation emphasizes knowing ideas, contexts, and events as interactive networks of mutually modifying aspects and relationships. Adopting this perspective on how order and meaning 'come to be' allows us to 'know what we already know differently.' That shift requires practices that enable us to 'see what we do not ordinarily see.'

Practicing Re-Seeing the Ordinary World—and Feeling Its Extra-Ordinary Dynamics

To 'practice' is to apply a concept or method for accomplishing some particular result. One practices by 'putting principles into action.' The primary principle shaping *Dynamic Constellation* as a practice assumes that dynamic complexity is best understood by modeling phenomena as interactive networks or constellations. Thus one practices constellation to increase awareness of reality's interactivity by 'seeing in terms of dynamically complex networks.' A practice of 'constellating consciousness' inherently redirects attention away from familiar assumptions and interpretations toward an extra-ordinary view of cause and effect. That re-orientation is prompted by techniques that enhance perception, conception, and representation of dynamic complexity. To fully appreciate how those methods broaden realistic awareness, they must be supported by experiential practices. These involve actions that generate 'felt encounters' with concurrent interactivity, emergent properties, and nonlinear dynamics. Together these techniques can be used to re-orient awareness of 'how things happen' and 'what they mean' around any particular topic or context

Dynamic Constellation as Alternative to Reductive Interpretation

Dynamic Constellation of interactive relationships is a way of asking ourselves what we are missing because of the limitations of our ordinary attitudes. Thus I present the practice of constellating dynamically interactive relationships as an alternative way for knowing 'how things happen.' The shift here is indicated in the contrast between phrases like 'figuring it all out,' 'getting on top of it,' 'summing it up,' or 'solving the mystery' versus expressions such as 'opening it up,' 'getting inside it,' 'laying it out,' or 'getting a feel for it.' A reductive attitude seeks to 'get to the point' by excluding all peripheral issues and providing a 'basic explanation.' The notion of constellation is alternative to this 'narrowing down.' It reveals what reduction often 'leaves out' by enabling a logical approach to perceiving the concurrent interactions of seemingly separate, linear events. In the broadest sense, dynamic constellation seeks to make the profound insights of complexity science more accessible and tangible by linking these to similar notions in other disciplines, particularly philosophy, psychology, the arts, literature, and mythology. The common thread drawn upon in all these fields of knowledge concerns the primary role of difference and discontinuity in creating both order and meaning. *Dynamic Constellation* seeks to 'connect the dots that are related but do not line up.' It does this in part by noting the differences and conflicts that are part of the 'wholeness that is not linear, singular, or centered.' This is not the normative approach to 'seeing reality.' However, it appears now to be 'scientifically valid.'

Engaging contrasting perspectives and paradigms constellates our consciousness in interactive networks that are more capable of understanding 'how the world actually works'

General Aspects of *Dynamic Constellation*

Four Phases in Developing Constellating Awareness and Practice

Diverse concepts and practices, such as those described below, are explored through four basic phases of *Dynamic Constellation*:

- 1. Confronting Habitual Reductions:** Identifying ways ordinary attitudes suppress complex awareness and disable adaptive creativity
- 2. Engaging Dynamically Complex Fact and Theory:** Exploring approaches that reveal dynamic complexity through constellative perspective
- 3. Stimulating Dynamically Complex Experience and Creativity:** Generating tangible encounters with dynamic complexity
- 4. Practical Applications of Constellating Methods:** Engaging these concepts and experiences in relation to your topics and contexts

The practices of *Dynamic Constellation* have two general categories of focus. The first concentrates upon confronting existing habits of reduction and simplification. This effort involves reconsideration of how one typically thinks about and describes familiar issues, concerns, and activities. Subsequently, focus shifts to exploring dynamical complexity through perspectives and experiences that reveal obscured fields of interactivity, unpredictable self-organization, the inherent turbulence of continuity, and paradoxical meaning.

The Confrontation with Reduction

It is inevitable that practical concerns, social conformity, and competition promote reductive attitudes. It is easier to think in stereotypes and communicate through simplistic generalizations. Thus our ordinary perspectives tend to reflexively obscure awareness of dynamic complexity. That being the case, becoming conscious of the fact is often quite difficult. Ordinary reliance upon reductive descriptions and simplistically oppositional judgments leads us to assume that truth and accuracy are expressed only in such terms. This reflexive reliance upon reduction must be exposed before any adequate appreciation of dynamic complexity can be approached. Whether we regard our selves as scientific or artistic, politically conservative or liberal, Eastern or Western, reflexive reduction is pervasively human.

Identifying It—Differentiating types of reductive concepts and expressions one relies upon

Making efforts to specify familiar thoughts and expressions that are dynamically reductive and how these configure awareness

Owning It—Accepting one's personal bias toward reduction as well as that of social standards

Taking responsibility for the effects reductive attitudes have in one's relations to self, others, and world

Deferring It—Suspending one's impulse toward reductive representation and simplistic expression

Learning to track reductive habits of modeling, interpreting, and judging so that these can be moderated by dynamic elaboration

The Engagement with Interactivity

Most every context and topic is composed of different elements that have multiple relationships with each other. Appreciating 'all that is involved' requires 'expanding' those elements so as to constellate their dynamic contrasts, diversities, discontinuities, and interdependencies. To do that we have to see, feel, think, and describe what is happening in concurrent and non-linear ways.

Seeing It—Constellating the 'second sight' that combines linear and non-linear awareness

Perceiving events as both dynamically sequential and concurrently interactive, proportionately and disproportionately generative

Thinking It—Re-modeling habits of thought to access and validate interactive complexity

Re-thinking how we think to consciously model interactive interconnectivity and the unpredictable order that emerges from it

Sensing It—Cultivating conscious experience of interactive relationships and non-linear dynamics

'Getting a feel for' the interactive dynamics in our selves, our relationships, work, and environments

Plotting It—Mapping contexts to reveal overt and covert networks of concurrent or mutually modifying activity

Creating multi-dimensional diagrams and metaphorical representations of concurrently interactive, non-linear relationships

Imagining It— Practicing the art and myth of knowing non-linear, interactive meaning and order

Engaging artistic expression and mythical representation as essential symbolic access to the dynamic complexity of Nature

Accepting It—Coming to appreciate the inevitability, necessity, and beauty of chaotically self-organizing dynamics

Forgoing notions of good and bad, right and wrong, like and dislike in order to embrace 'what actually happens'

Telling It—Privileging dynamically complex description over the simplifications of reduction, preference, and judgment

Developing language and style that represent self-organizing discontinuity and the contrasting meanings arising from complex contexts

Applying It—Acting in Accord with the Interactivity of Self, Others, Organizations, and Environments

Practicing behaviors and formulating strategies that 'cooperate with' the non-linear dynamics of our minds, relationships, and environments

Discover the extra-ordinary nature of the ordinary world—
use what you already know to constellate its hidden interactivities

Constellating through Analytical, Imaginal, and Experiential Practices

The aspects of *Dynamic Constellation* listed above are generated through a variety of concepts and activities. Categories for these include:

- > Non-technical terms for differentiating aspects of dynamic complexity
- > Various methods for plotting types of relationships in interactive fields
- > Symbolic and metaphorical approaches to representing sets of mutually modifying factors
- > Reflective practices for revealing the influences of reductive bias, judgment, and preference on understanding
- > Explorations of art, literature, poetics, music, and myth as 'expansive constellation'
- > Exercises that promote actual experience of interactivity, nonlinear creativity, and self-organizing adaptation
- > Approaches to incorporating greater correspondence with interactive dynamics and emergent properties in one's life and work.

Specific Applications of *Dynamic Constellation*

The generalized concepts and language used to practice *Dynamic Constellation* are readily adapted to any subject, context, or specific discipline of knowledge. They are as useful in reflection upon obscured aspects of personal life as in elaborating the mutually modifying intricacies of social relations, economic conditions, or cultural phenomena. The rational, imaginal, and experiential elements of this practice for elaborating interactivity awareness can be employed informally or in conjunction with technical terms and perspectives of particular disciplines. Whatever the context, *Dynamic Constellation* is intended to assist individuals to 'know what they already know' more complexly and completely. That means evading habitual assumptions to learn how familiar feelings, thoughts, experiences, information, and theories reveal surprising associations and insight.

Examples of Informal Context-Specific Constellation:

- > *Personal Life Constellation*
- > *Interpersonal Relationship Constellation*
- > Work Context or Process Constellation
- > Aesthetic Experience Constellation

Applied to elaborating interactivities of events and meanings in specific contexts, constellating practices assist in how:

- * Events, thoughts, and feelings are engaged as interrelated factors without reducing these to binary states of good/bad, right/wrong
- * Personal reflection tracks meaningful themes that emerge in the self-organization of one's life, work, and relationship patterns over time
- * Partners approach miscommunication and mutual frustration as expressing unacknowledged patterns of cooperative non-cooperation
- * Organizations attend to the creative potentials of diversity and disruption during periods of uncertain development
- * Art, music, and literature become experiential encounters with the extra-ordinary significance of interactivity's emergent meaning

Examples of Discipline-Specific Constellation:

- > *Psychological Constellation*
- > *Sociological Constellation*
- > *Economic Constellation*
- > *Political Constellation*
- > *Historical Constellation*

- > *Ecological Constellation*
- > *Cultural Constellation*
- > *Artistic Constellation*
- > *Mythological Constellation*
- > *Philosophical Constellation*

When associated with discipline-specific methods, the generalized practices of *Dynamic Constellation* contribute to how these examine specific topics—by promoting the elaboration of interdependent, nonlinearly generative, disjunctively emergent relationships among their aspects. Thus *Dynamic Constellation* can enhance efforts as diverse as the ways:

- * Activists perceive and communicate the complexities of social and economic issues
- * Business people understand and engage their ways companies and markets self-organize
- * Psychotherapy elicits a 'metaphorically realistic image' of interacting references compounding a case of post-traumatic stress syndrome
- * Socio-economic investigation correlates conflicts generating feedback loops that distort the intended operations of a health care system
- * Political analysis articulates how reductive simplifications in rhetoric are used to promote a government policy for ulterior motives
- * Historians focus on chaotic causations that shaped a social movement in unplanned ways, of which its participants remain ignorant
- * Literary interpretation highlights the dynamic tension between linearly progressive and laterally expansive aspects of narrative in a novel
- * Pollsters pose questions likely to reveal contradictions in public attitudes that promote the rational assertion of irrational beliefs
- * Educators consciously counter the debilitating effects of reductive interpretation and simplistic judgment on holistic understanding

If dynamically complex contexts 'behave as if they are alive'—
then it is useful to 'see' them that way

Telling a Whole Story

I use a set of general terms for describing dynamic complexity along with references from diverse disciplines to assist people in 'telling the tales of what actually happens' in their lives more accurately and completely. Complexity science presents the empirical reality of non-linear creativity and irreducible interactivity. Studies of mythology provide a sense of the diverse ways all cultures conceive, imagine, and accommodate to the orderly disorder of life. Depth Psychology generates a profound appreciation of the necessarily diversified and conflicted wholeness of mind or psyche. Archetypal Psychology models a method for non-reductive, non-judgmental, constellative analysis. These references have guided my investigation of how complexity is represented in yet other disciplines of thought and knowledge. Biology and Environmental Ecology produce profoundly tangible examples of how spontaneous organization and nonlinear dynamics are integral to the creation and maintenance of life.

Historical study emphasizes the radical contingency of currently interacting events that somehow become a progressive narrative. Art and literature symbolize the confounding intricacies of experience, relationships, and meaning. Post-modern Philosophy confronts the limitations of linearly self-consistent reasoning as a means of arriving at 'The Truth.' All these different ways of knowing are contributel to telling a dynamically 'whole' story about our selves and the world.

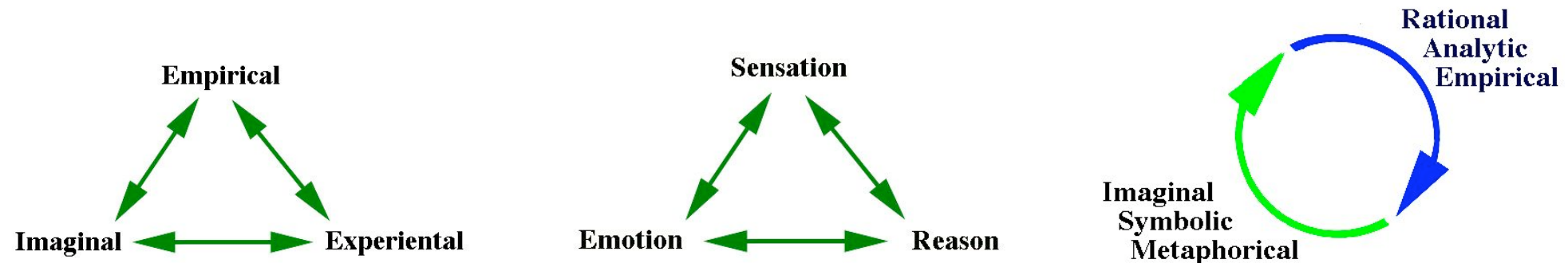
Telling Our Tales the Way They Actually Happen—*Dynamic Constellation* as Narrative Therapy

In a more particular sense, dynamic constellation is therapeutic response to 'narrative reduction.' Ordinarily, when describing what happens it seems practical to narrate events as sequences of actions. However, that way of modeling 'what happens' tends to block our ability to 'tell' the complicated realities of our selves and the world. Thus there is always a conflict between narrative sequence and the depth or 'breadth' of events. To 'tell interactivity' one must somehow 'expand' events and relationships into three-dimensional constellations of elements and interactions that 'happen all at once.' Furthermore, ongoing description requires representing how those concurrent interactions develop over the fourth dimension of time. Narrative that attempts to include interactive dynamics 'in the moment' must somehow 'jump around' within 'the story' so as to relate concurrent aspects of events and how these interact simultaneously to 'move the story forward.' There is a sense in which complex systems, whether as a person or a city, do not have 'a story' but are in fact many 'stories' or 'lines of development' occurring all at once. Emphasizing dynamic constellation in narrative description can confront our reflexive dependency upon linear perspective with the confounding realities of interactivity. Dynamic constellation 'tells stories' but not simply 'from beginning to end.'

***Dynamic Constellation* and the 'Mythic Mode of Knowing'**

'Mythical mentality' stands in stark contrast to that of mechanistic reduction. The 'worlds of myth' are not composed in the terms of practical reality. The dead live, inanimate objects speak, and natural forces take the forms of divine gods and goddesses. Such characteristics suggest that myth is about something other than 'ordinary reality.' Thus it is compelling that the worlds portrayed by empirical complexity science and imaginary myth are equally 'strange' to our ordinary ways of sensing reality. The scientific language, with its technically arcane analytical abstractions and esoteric mathematical calculations, seeks precise descriptions of empirical 'facts.' Mythic representation is fantastically exaggerated, metamorphic, and implausible. However, despite their differences, both represent 'how things happen' in similarly dynamical ways. Complexity science portrays a realm of unpredictable turbulence out of which order spontaneously emerges, morphs, and disappears again into more discontinuity. Its complex systems create, sustain, and adapt themselves to changing environments. Myth's symbolism suggests much the same 'nature of Nature.' Associating these 'dynamically strange versions of reality' suggests that myth is the archaic mode of knowing irreducible interactivity. That insight, in turn, suggests that complexity science is the 'myth of our time.' Brought together as 'languages of dynamic complexity,' each serves to make the other more intelligible. This connection allows them to 'flow into each other' in a manner that activates our full range of 'sense abilities'—analytical reason, metaphoric imagination, tangible sensation, subjective emotion, and objective calculation. Thus the rational can be experienced symbolically and the symbolic comprehended analytically so as to 'recondition' conscious capacities for appreciating the emergent properties of self and world.

Dynamic Constellation depends upon the interplay of different styles of thought, sensation, and expression to activate the mythical mode of holistic comprehension



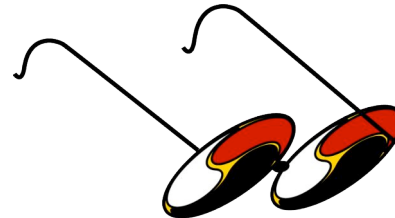
Promoting the interactivity of one's sense abilities—the 'constellation of one's consciousness'—is enhanced by engaging diverse cognitive functions in an interplay of analytic and symbolic awareness. Abstract concepts must be illustrated by the 'metamorphic creativity of imaginal invention' in ways that 'bring to life' the extra-ordinary dynamics of scientifically interactive reality.

For further detail on *Dynamic Constellation* see the [more info page](#)

Think More Realistically—Constellate Yourn Consciousness

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**If it is human for us to simplify then it must also be human to challenge our reductions—
how else can we adapt to the complexity of interactive reality?**