

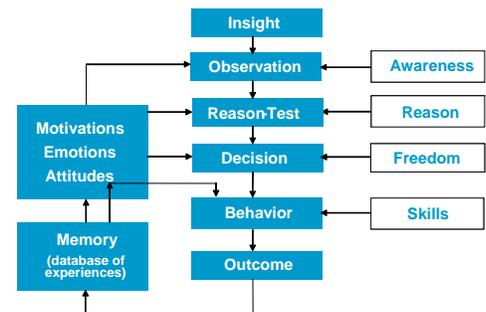
# The Experiential Dynamic<sup>SM</sup>

by

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In our book [The Greatest Good](#), we introduced the *experiential dynamic*<sup>1</sup> as a context model representing the interaction of both the “required conditions” for creative interchange (CI) and the CI enablers of insight, reason and freedom, as described by Dr. Henry Nelson Wieman<sup>2</sup>. We offer this model as a representation of how we humans experience our environment and each other and wherein the overarching linkages between motivations and behaviors. This white paper offers a step-by-step explanation of the *experiential dynamic* and the levers which can remove barriers to the process.

*Experiential Dynamic*

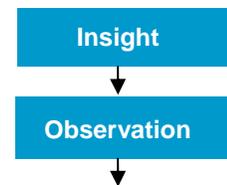


## The Process

### INSIGHT and OBSERVATION:

These two steps in the experiential dynamic are tightly interwoven. An observation may trigger an insight or intuition or idea; an idea may result in several observations, and, thusly, other insights. So we see that the sequence of these two steps of the dynamic may be reiterative; however, for our purposes we will start with the instance where the insight precedes the observation.

Insight may come from various sources. We may awake with an insight; we may arrive at a unique insight after several cycles through the experiential dynamic; an insight may come from our experience(s) with other people and our environment.



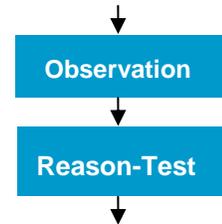
We quickly sort out past observations that we see as relevant to the new insight. We “scan” for new observations to serve as “data” for the next steps in the experiential dynamic process.

<sup>1</sup> The “experiential dynamic” is adapted from a behavior model by Johan Roels called “The Origin of Habit-Behavior” presented at the Creative Interchange Conference, Atlanta, 2001.

<sup>2</sup> Wieman, Henry Nelson. *Man’s Ultimate Commitment*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1991, p. 135 ff.

## REASON-TESTING:

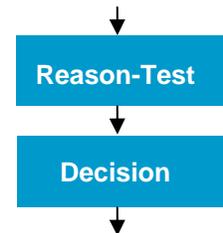
Wieman wrote: “The new idea is the grist for the mill of reason but reason cannot create its own grist. Creativity produces that.”<sup>3</sup> Applying reason to an insight (and related observations) is called reason-testing. An insight doesn’t become knowledge (in our database of experiences) until it has met the tests of reason.



Both reason and insight are required to understand another human being. If no insight exists, then we can not bring to bear any reason-testing and thus can never understand the other person. Conversely, if we refuse to test another’s insight by all that our reason demands – listening attentively for further observations, making appropriate inferences and remaining open to all that the other has to offer – we will create barriers of misunderstanding. By holding to our original ideas about the other person in a dogmatic manner we create these barriers. By bringing both insight and reason-testing to our experiences with other people we realize the depth and fullness of such rich experiences. Without creating barriers to communication, we find our relationships full of trust, curiosity, and imagination.

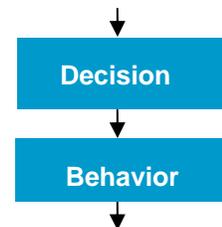
## DECISION:

After reason-testing, we will make some decision, even if it’s a decision to do nothing or to delay making a decision. The decision may be that the insight you have reason-tested is “worthy” of being held to be a “truth” which may be a value in future reason-testing. These innate steps of insight, reason-testing, and decision serve as the core of our transformational process toward “the greatest good” and all that we might be in living our life to its fullest. If we choose not to (or are forbidden to) remain open to reason-testing new ideas and reason-testing old “truths” with new insights, we limit our own personal growth and those with whom we relate. (We will speak later about the enablers for this process.)



## BEHAVIOR:

This is the primary manifestation of the decision: how we execute the decision. Sometimes a process beneficial<sup>4</sup> decision results in a process detrimental outcome because of the execution of the decision. If hurt-based methods are used in the execution of a decision, the outcome will likely be counter to the potential of the CI process. It is important that we execute our decisions with worth-based skills (an enabler) in order to produce an outcome beneficial to all those involved.



The CI behaviors include authentic and open interaction, understanding with

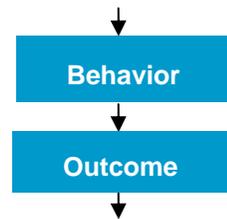
<sup>3</sup> Wieman, Henry Nelson, *op cit*, p. 139.

<sup>4</sup> Wieman defines the quality of “good” to anything that encourages or supports the CI process and the quality of “bad” or “evil” to anything that interferes with the CI process.

appreciation, integrating new knowledge, continuous improvement and transformation. Each person and each organization may further define behaviors within these overarching categories.

#### OUTCOME:

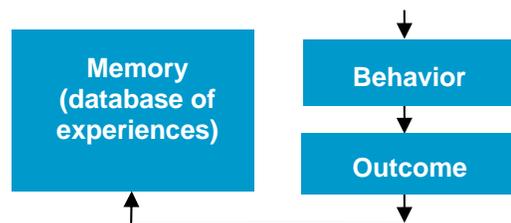
Every behavior will have some outcome; it may be as expected and/or entirely different from what was planned. Whatever the outcome – “good” or “bad” or in between – we remember it and consciously or subconsciously connect the behavior with the outcome. As beings who prefer pleasure to pain, we will adjust future behaviors accordingly.



The risk is that some would shut out future experiences in general to protect themselves from potentially bad outcomes. We should guard against falling into this degenerative thinking. If we assume protective behaviors to insulate us from potentially unpleasant outcomes, we also insulate ourselves (and those with whom we relate) from the potentially pleasant and surprising outcomes. This protection is called evasive behavior and can lead to a downward spiral away from personal growth.

#### MEMORY:

Memory is our database of experiences. This is the storehouse of knowledge upon which we draw when we exercise our reason, make our decisions and form our attitudes, emotions and, eventually, our motivation and values. We should realize that whenever we limit our behaviors and, consequently, our outcomes, we also suppress the experiences which might enrich our memory, thereby impacting our future selves and others.



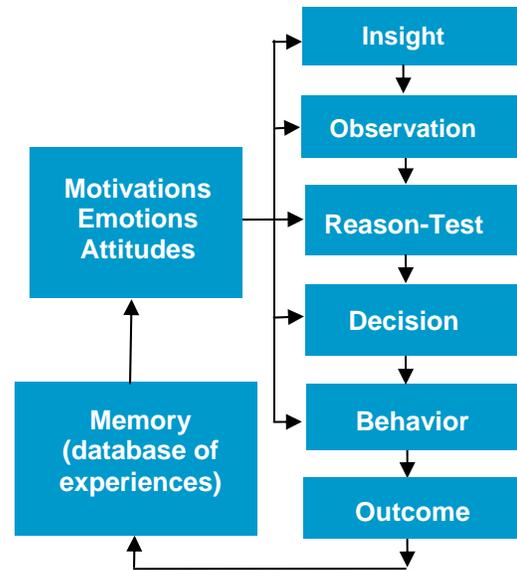
#### MOTIVATIONS, EMOTIONS, ATTITUDES:

Integral to each person’s personality are motivations, emotions and attitudes. As we complete the experiential dynamic cycle we come to the primary lever in the cycle— motivation. Motivation is a function of value. For Wieman a value is any goal seeking behavior, i.e. we are motivated or energized to seek it because it holds value for us. There are two basic types of motivations: worth-based and hurt-based.

Hurt-based motivation results from an acquired, erroneous belief that one’s self-worth must be earned from others. Because of this belief, hurt-based motivated people tend to find the worth they feel they deserve is never validated by their experiences with others, leading to hurt and the emotions of anxiety, hostility, blame and shame. Hurt-based attitudes tend to be those of confusion, polarization, and distraction. Those who experience their environment through hurt-based motivation practice evasive behaviors (to protect themselves from further anxiety and hostility) and experience outcomes which constrain personal growth, cause alienation, repress feelings, inhibit growth in others and produce distrusting relationships. Hurt-based behaviors tend to be

superficial, manipulative, deceptive, argumentative, closed-minded, and dismissive.

Worth-based motivation is rooted in the fundamental belief that worth is inalienably created at birth and can not be lessened or expanded by anyone. Worth-based motivated people do not feel their worth is threatened and consequently exhibit a sense of ease, caring and openness. They typically have attitudes that are trusting and trustful, curious, adaptable, comfortable with ambiguity, imaginative and tenacious. Because of these attitudes, worth-based people are open to authentic interaction, appreciative understanding, progressive integration and continuous improvement. Worth-based outcomes tend to be those of shared meaning, shared values, shared vision and shared commitment, synergy, high productivity, individual freedom and an overall trusting relationship.



One's motivation fundamentally impacts how one views insights, makes observations in relation to the insights, reason-tests new ideas, makes decisions and chooses which behaviors to employ in the execution of decisions.

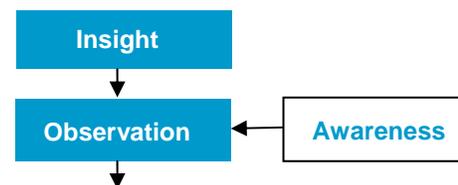
We believe people can realize worth-based outcomes by using worth-based behavioral skills which align with the CI process. Even though initially one's motivation may not be worth-based, by using worth-based skills worth-based outcomes are more likely to be realized. Motivations may change (for those participating in the communication) because of the worth-based outcomes. The following sections will explain the enablers to the experiential dynamic.

### The Enablers

Based on Wieman's writings and our experience we have found four enablers to the process defined above: awareness, reason, freedom and skills. Each of these enablers helps to remove barriers to the CI process, which gives birth to the mind and transforms it to heights unimaginable.

#### AWARENESS:

You can think of awareness as the pipe or portal through which we "allow" new experiences to enter our experiential dynamic process. The greater the awareness, the more we experience from our environment. Sometimes we use the words open-minded, alert, awakened, and enlightened (to name



a few) to refer to awareness. Limiting our awareness, intentionally or unintentionally, will dim our experiences, cause us to miss many observations and disregard certain new insights, thus throttling the growth process. Our awareness may be limited by outside influences, such as “protectors” in our lives or institutions which “prohibit” our access to certain experiences in our environment. Some of us limit our own awareness by internal anxieties, hostilities and shame.

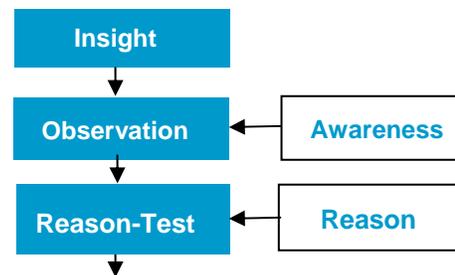
Awareness and freedom work in tandem. Think of freedom (another enabler) as either constraining or expanding the awareness “portal.” We grow as awareness expands and awareness increases freedom by introducing progressively more options. The more aware we are the deeper and broader our experience becomes. The more times we experience our environment (preferably in a worth-based manner), the more awareness we are likely to enjoy. Awareness is self-enabling.

#### REASON:

Wieman wrote: “Knowledge is the name we give to affirmations when they have been subjected to treatment by certain rules of procedure and organized accordingly. These rules of procedure we call reason.”<sup>5</sup> Creativity produces the insight; reason must discover (reason-test) what the insight truly means to us.

We often think of reason as a repository of values that we have acquired through our lives—through millions of iterations of the experiential dynamic. Consequently, hurt-based motivations are likely to generate an insecure, closed set of values; whereas, worth-based motivations are likely to produce expansive, open set of values.

As we apply these values accordingly, we build on these differing values respectively; hence the downward or upward spirals toward degenerative or transformational growth. Our “knowledge” becomes tainted as we use tainted reason/values for further reason-testing, and the cycle continues.



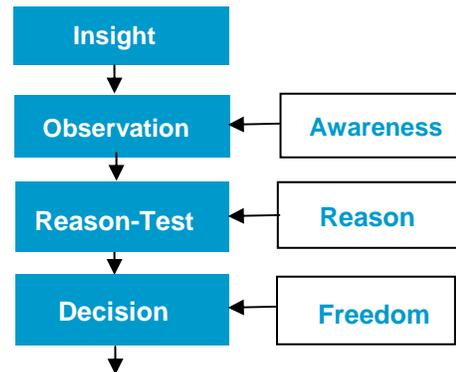
This is the importance of reason (and, thereby, reason-testing) to the growth of each of our personalities and communities (because the values of a community are merely a composite of the values of those individuals within it). The experiential dynamic process (or something similar to it) happens (hurt-based or worth-based). If the leaders of our organizations, institutions and communities do not foster an environment of worth-based reason and values, then the individuals and the community will be extremely vulnerable to the downward degenerating spiral that comes from hurt-based values. Leaders, especially corporate leaders, have every incentive to create a community of worth-based individuals for it is from the community that workers, customers and future leaders grow. In the long-run, without them the corporations, institutions and communities are unlikely to survive.

<sup>5</sup> Wieman, Henry Nelson, *op cit*, p. 145.

## FREEDOM:

This enabler can best be described to be “(1) awareness of the alternatives which might be chosen in any situation, (2) the use of a reliable criterion of choice to distinguish the best practicable alternative, (3) the will to choose and seek the best, and (4) the power to achieve what is chosen. If any of these is lacking, freedom is lacking.”<sup>6</sup>

The nature of freedom is that we are free to choose *not* to be aware of our alternatives, *not* to use reliable choice criterion, *not* to seek the best, or *not* to use the power we have to achieve. Freedom can be self-constrained, often subconsciously because of fears or anxieties deep within our personalities which represent internal conflicts. Evasive (hurt-based) behaviors which result from these internal conflicts anesthetize our freedom and the CI process.

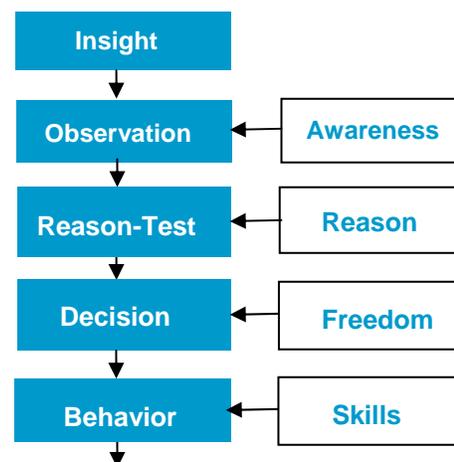


We may live or work in an environment where freedom is lacking. Industry leaders are beginning to realize that the economy, to sustain itself, requires the growth and progression of the human character. Once a motivator, fear can no longer be relied on to induce people to work. Lasting positive motivation can only come from the personal development found in the (worth-based) work environment—an environment rich in freedom. If a company is looking for innovation and thinking “outside the box,” freedom (in a fear-less, high-trust environment) is an important enabler.

## SKILLS:

We mentioned earlier that motivation is the primary lever in the experiential dynamic. Motivation is difficult to alter per se; however, over time, motivation can change through the CI process especially if the individual can begin to experience worth-based outcomes. As we see above in the experiential dynamic, worth-based outcomes are more likely to result when one uses worth-based behaviors. This is where the “skills” enabler can encourage the conditions for the CI process so that it is less obstructed and transformation is more likely to occur. Such transformation consequently transforms our motivation.

We refer to “skills” as the secondary lever in the experiential dynamic. If one wishes to increase the likelihood of producing worth-based outcomes, they may draw on worth-based skills to effect worth-based behaviors. Worth-based skills fall into four overarching CI process



<sup>6</sup> Wieman, Henry Nelson. *The Source of Human Good*. Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1995, p. 300.

phases: authentic interaction, appreciative understanding, progressive integration and continuous improvement and transformation. In contrast, hurt-based skills (if we can use the same term here) tend to result in manipulation, deception, superficiality, negativity and argumentation.

We have found that a creative transformation begins when we can

1. teach individuals new skills (and reinforce existing skills),
2. raise their awareness with respect to worth-based communication, and
3. solidify their commitment to transformation of self and others with whom they relate.

### Conclusion

We have completed the description of the experiential dynamic context model, shown in full below. This is our humble attempt to explain the interrelationships between the “required conditions” of CI and insight, reason and freedom as defined by Dr. Wieman. For many this model has served as a context within which a richer understanding of creative interchange can be engendered, a deeper appreciation for the implications of hurt-based and worth-based motivations in our relationships with others, and the importance of these relationships on our personal transformation, the growth of our communities and the institutions within which we live.

### *Experiential Dynamic*

