

Perspectives on science and other theories

Open Systems Theory (OST) is just a branch or area of science like any other and those who work with OST see themselves as scientists much like any other. As such, most practitioners have a lively interest in science more generally and a scientific approach to matters of interest as they arise.

With his curiosity, prodigious intellect and appetite for greater understanding, Fred's work ranged far and wide as he lurked in and illuminated many 'dark corners' as Hans van Beinum liked to call them. As can be seen from the papers below, they are a mixed bunch.

Some are commentaries on current issues as they arose, others reflect recurring themes over time such as the roles and validity of methods such as action research or the single case. Other articles or notes are evaluations and/or critiques of the theories of others in similar or related fields. A few written during our stay in Philadelphia document the divergence of thought between Fred and Russ Ackoff.

Others again are book reviews or his dismal thoughts about the parade of fad and fashions in what sometimes passes for social science. Perhaps we should have a separate heading for social science but there are no hard and fast borders between science and social science. Indeed as Fred always said when asked what he did or what 'social science' entailed, "anything with people in it". As at one level science is a human activity, i.e. we cannot take the people out of it, perhaps we should regard social science as the whole, of which the other sciences are only parts.