

Postscript: **What We Leave Out** (my ambition; what I want to share)

Komm, drücke mich recht zärtlich an dein Herz!
Doch nicht zu fest, damit das Glas nicht springe.
Das ist die Eigenschaft der Dinge:
Natürlichen genügt das Weltall kaum;
Was künstlich ist, verlangt geschlossenen Raum.¹

Goethe, Faust, Zweiter Teil – Akt II – v.315

I. Why PSE?

The Principle of Systematic Exclusion is not just an artificial construct. It carries a *simple*, practical message—a message that ancient (primeval), nature-rooted societies understood intuitively, but which modern, materialist cultures seem almost to have forgotten. Everything we see around us is *history*: either of *adaptation* or *disintegration*. Adaptation is a *choice*, but to choose is *always also to exclude*.

And—according to PSE—in *what we exclude lies the true challenge*.

PSE is a principle that nature itself unmistakably presents to us. Nature shows us how systems arise and can endure: by drawing boundaries, by filtering, by selecting—and, above all, *by leaving out what does not matter* in order to persist.

Ignoring this natural cue leads to *survivorship bias*² and overestimation. We then mistake what, in our eyes, continues to exist for *what is complete*—what is truly real. We come to believe that from what we see in our own limited little world, we can fully deduce what exists—*what nature is*. Acknowledging this is the ultimate challenge for us humans.

With every act of selection, with every form of classification, with every system of knowledge, we draw *boundaries*. These are of great value to us humans, for they make it possible for *structure* to appear in our *rational* world—and for that natural coherence to become *visible* there as well. However, coherence comes at a price. As *Prigogine* and *Stengers* point out, the price of structure is resisting the natural tendency toward disintegration (*entropy*). And, crucially, *only open systems can pay that price*³ (reduction of entropy). The same holds for our own—artificial—systems.

It becomes dangerous when we humans forget that price—and the inseparable openness that comes with it—in our daily lives. If we do not continuously reflect on what we leave out, selection hardens into *dogma*. Boundaries turn into *walls*. Categories become *prisons*. Systems become *closed frames*, cut loose from the reality from which they once arose and in which they are embedded.

And a closed system, left to itself, will wither and eventually fall apart ([5]; entropy; PSE).

¹ “Come, hold me gently to your heart! Yet not so firm, for glass will break. *Such is the way of things: The natural finds the boundless cosmos barely enough; The crafted craves the confines of a closed domain.*”

² *Survivorship bias* is a form of *confirmation bias*. However, for me, the difference is that *confirmation bias* applies to agents within any frame, while *survivorship bias* refers to an inescapable fate of conscious men within the frame of the *holoscript*.

³ *Prigogine* shows that order in complex systems arises not in spite of entropy, but through it. Open, dissipating systems -far from equilibrium- maintain or increase their internal organization by *exporting entropy* to their surroundings. It is this active dissipation -this entropy cost- that makes stable complexity possible. Entropy, he reminds us, is the price of structure—but *only open systems can pay it*.

This is not merely abstract theory. It is a matter of existence or non-existence. It is the unequivocal message of nature. Indigenous peoples, from the Amazon to the Arctic, lived with a deep awareness of that openness. That which could not be understood or seen—lying beyond their horizon—was to be honored [1, 3, 4, 6, et al.]. What was beyond direct perception was humbly carried along through ritual and symbolism.

These cultures understood that the wholeness of their world lay not only in what was held onto, but in the *tension between holding and releasing*. Their world was therefore not severed from the *chaos* of life, but *open* to it. They lived with their eyes on—and attuned to—nature, *their home*, in a dynamic, resonant balance between visible order and the elusive, ungraspable. A resonance we are now striving to rediscover.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832) expressed the danger of such a closed system in his dramatic portrayal of the Homunculus in *Faust* [2].

This artificial being, brought forth in a flask by Mephistopheles and Wagner, is clever, radiant, and autonomous—yet tragically confined to that flask, cut off from real life.

Goethe's Homunculus is structure without *substrate*; form without *friction*—lacking a natural environment. Imprisoned in a closed, artificial system.

As Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers concisely observe in *Order Out of Chaos* [5], Goethe's vivid image warns of the sterile outcomes of closed systems, where entropy can only increase—systems detached from the creative turbulence that is an intrinsic part of *Reality*, of boundless *Nature*.

It is precisely this insight that compels me to share the deeper implications of PSE. And I try to do so in a language and form that anyone can understand. Clear, accessible, and grounded in simple experience.

It is not merely an abstract philosophical tool. It is a lens through which we might regain sensitivity to what modern culture habitually omits: the unmeasurable, the unspoken, the ecological, the sacred. In what we leave out lies the possibility of renewal.

And *harmony*.

II. So, what does this mean for daily life?

For my own daily life, it means this:

Walk the marked path where prescribed, step beyond it where it is allowed, and go wherever you *feel* it is possible to go—toward the unknown. Looking around *freely*, everywhere, yet aware that *failing to adapt* ultimately leads to *exclusion* (hamartia⁴).

Use your reason, *but let your feeling speak*. Natural (or systematic) exclusion makes you sensitive to what an open system truly is. *A system boundary is not an absolute barrier*⁵.

After all, *there is no system—no structure—without an environment*.

A system is, for its survival and development, entirely dependent on its environment. To ignore, forget, or neglect this connection makes the system vulnerable. That, in my view, is the core of Goethe's message. And of PSE.

⁴ *Hamartia* is the classical term for a tragic flaw or fatal error—often not from malice, but from misunderstanding or unconscious omission.

⁵ This does raise questions in the *ethical realm*: for example, what exactly constitutes “*transgressive behaviour*”? But even there, Nature offers a beautiful answer (SBL).

Put simply: *always look beyond the fence before you act. That is not just caution, it's a way of being. And that's why you must always take the environment into account.*

III. Summary

Plain words, same truth:

We build a 'safe' world by leaving things out. In doing so, meaning does arise in our world, but if we forget (or ignore) what we leave out, we ultimately lose our balance. We become entangled in narrow perspectives. Our world grows ever smaller and harder—and, in the end, hostile toward humankind.

The message of nature in this is unmistakable: *real* life requires openness—including *space for the unknown*.

And thus, respect for what we cannot, and must not, control.
It is there, at the foundation, that true renewal begins.

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References

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