

**The  
Working Manager's Mirror  
aka  
The VSM**

**Making It Work**



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First edition

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## **CONTENTS**

<b>Using The VSM .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>01 Why Is The VSM Not Popular Among Managers Or Management Educators?.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>02 A Consequence Of Causality (i.e. Y is caused by X) Engrained In Normal English Language Structure ...</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>03 Alternative Realities: rational v experiential .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>04 Making Experience/Life Work (by taking a look at what is doing the looking).....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>05 A Working Mind: clarity and confusion .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>06 Transformation: the re-creating of The Self.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>07 Making It Work: taking a look at what is doing the looking .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Figures 1 &amp; 2 A Working Mind: Clarity and Confusion .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Figure 3 The Essential Experience .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Figures 4 &amp; 5 A Mapping .....</b>	<b>10</b>

## **Using The VSM**

This work is a guide to using [Stafford Beer's Viable System Model \(aka the VSM\)](#) in order to see our individual selves in operation with clarity.

The VSM in essence is a complete working model of the source of individual natural power and natural power management.

By virtue of conditioning/programming reflected in causality engrained in normal English language structure most managers have forgotten to use the connection to their own source.

To use the VSM to re-create the connection with individual source and natural power, [The Exegesis Programme](#) was written using a synthetical language structure that simply reflects responsibility for connection back where it belongs, back on to the reader.

So, the end result of working through [The Exegesis Programme](#) and sharing the experience vocally with another person is a process of complete transformation – a reconnection with source and natural power, aka enlightenment. A manager taking back his own property.

To facilitate the process bear this in mind: responsibility is what works, your rational mind always takes you away from your true/complete experience, and feelings (of separation) in opposition to your goal are what keeps you from achieving it.

## **01: Why Is The VSM Not Popular Among Managers Or Management Educators?**

Consider this possibility:

The systemic set of subsystems in the VSM is a reflection of what works and produces/makes sense in the human neurological system. In other words, it is the core of our individual communication and control system. So using/applying it fully challenges our individual belief system about what management is and exposes what each of us can and cannot handle. Generally most people are unwilling to take a look at themselves in operation and back off from the challenge, and a consequence of this has been and is, poor adoption of/poor general awareness of/lack of popularity of the VSM some 30 plus years after [Diagnosing The System For Organisations](#), Beer's last key work on the subject.

## **02: A Consequence Of Causality (i.e. Y is caused by X) Engrained In Normal English Language Structure**

Expanding on the possibility:

The systemic set of subsystems already is source/cause (of production/creation). No subsystem is caused by (an)other(s) and this is reflected in the VSM diagram i.e. zero causality. To reduce linguistic causality (i.e. Y is caused by X) to a very low level (but not zero) Beer used elaborate language in his description made up of three books (Brain, Heart, Diagnosing)[1] and a journal article (JORS)[2] – a word count that can make reaching an understanding of the whole idea a longer and more off-putting process.

Using a synthetic language structure (i.e. zero causality) simplifies linguistic complexity and reduces word count to a minimum. The end result is a more clearly, concisely and well defined description of the systemic set – according to publicly available information in 2016 the only example of this is contained in the latter part of [The Exegesis Programme](#).

### **Footnotes**

- 1) [Brain Of The Firm](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. 1994; [The Heart Of Enterprise](#), 1994; [Diagnosing The System For Organizations](#), 1985.
- 2) “[The Viable System Model: Its Provenance, Development, Methodology and Pathology](#)”, Journal of the Operational Research Society, Vol. 25 No 1, 1984, pp. 7-25; also without diagram at [kybernetik.ch/dwn/Viable\\_System\\_Model.pdf](http://kybernetik.ch/dwn/Viable_System_Model.pdf)

### **03: Alternative Realities: rational v experiential**

Expanding more on the possibility:

Beer's derivation of the VSM differentiates between a rational/normal reality (of stimulus and stimulation), and an experiential/true reality (of stimulation).

As an organism operating within an environment (and as individuals each one of us is this), reaching a full understanding of the fact that there is no stimulus at the organism/environment boundary in our individual true reality can be extremely difficult. In true reality there is only experience, stimulation produced/created by the individual organism (each one of us). So the truth is, individual experience is all there is in (true) reality.

Causality engrained in normal English language structure however, leads us to believe incorrectly that a normal reality is a true reality - consider the philosopher Vaihinger's words in this extract:

“

[1]. . . For example, take the ordinary sentence: **The book is blue. Blue** is the name that we, as native speakers of English, have learned to use to describe our experience of a certain portion of the continuum of visible light. Misled by the structure of our language, we come to assume that **blue** is a property of the object that we refer to as book rather than being the name which we have given our sensation.

“In perception, the sensation complex **sweet-white** is constantly occurring in the substance **sugar**. The psyche then applies to this combination the category of a thing and its attributes: **The sugar is sweet**. Here, however, the **white** appears also as an object. **Sweet** is an attribute. The psyche is acquainted with the sensation **white** in other cases, where it appears as an attribute, so that, in this case too, white is treated as an attribute. But the category thing-attribute is inapplicable if **sweet** and **white** are attributes and no other sensation is given. Here language comes to our help, and by applying the name **sugar** to the whole perception, enables us to treat the single sensation as attributes . . . Who authorized thought to assume that **white** was a thing, that **sweet** was an attribute? What right had it to go on to assume that both were attributes and then mentally add an object as their carrier? The justification can be found neither in the sensations themselves nor in what we now regard as reality . . . All that is given to consciousness is sensation. By adding a Thing to which sensations are supposed to adhere as attributes, thought commits a very serious error. It hypostasizes sensation, which in the last analysis is only a process, as a subsistent attribute, and ascribes this **attribute** to a **thing** that either exists only in the complex of sensations itself, or has been simply added by thought to what has been sensed . . . Where is the **sweet** that is ascribed to the sugar? It exists only in the act of sensation. . . . Thought not only changes immediate sensation thereby, but withdraws further and further from reality and becomes increasingly entangled in its own forms.

By means of the **creative faculty** – to use this scientific term – it has invented a Thing which is supposed to possess an Attribute. This Thing is a fiction, the Attribute as such is a fiction, and the whole relationship is a fiction.”

Vaihinger.[2]

”

### Footnotes

- 1) Extract from pp. 11-12, Bandler, R., & Grinder, J., “[The Structure of Magic 1](#)”, Science and Behavior Books Inc., Palo Alto, 1975. Copyright © 1975 by Science and Behavior Books Inc. Reproduced with permission.
- 2) Extract from Vaihinger, H., “[The Philosophy of ‘As If’](#)”, Routledge, Kegan and Paul, Ltd., London, 1924.

## **04: Making experience/life work** **(by taking a look at what is doing the looking)**

Expanding more on the possibility:

From a very early age our individual systemic set of subsystems (essence/source of the VSM) produces/creates, contains, regulates, and accumulates experience. Each one of us in essence is a container of, experience/life/the self.

As young children each one of us is conditioned/programmed to fall into agreement with a general (/popularly shared) belief that a normal reality is a true reality, an error in perception that causality engrained in normal language structures simply reflects. As a natural consequence of this our individual adult lives no longer truly work because we think, feel, converse, and operate within the confines of a construct of normal reality.

To make experience/life/the self work (in true reality) again we can choose to take a look at our individual selves in operation by sharing[1] a complete description of the systemic set of subsystems already re-created using a zero-causality language structure. In other words, by using such a description as a mirror on the self. According to publicly available information in 2016 the only book form that contains such a mirror is [The Exegesis Progamme](#).

### Footnotes

- 1) **share**: re-create in essence (vocally with another person)

## **05: A Working Mind: clarity and confusion**

Expanding more on the possibility:

As source/cause (of production/creation), the systemic set of subsystems (recurring in the VSM) produces/creates, contains, regulates, and accumulates, experience. Each one of us contains the experience that is, consciousness that contains/is, being that is, working that is, being OK that is, a mind that is, knowing that is, the manager that contains/is, a rational with emotional mind, that contains/is, the systemic set of subsystems that is, source that is, the producer/the creator, the self producer/the self creator.

In the 'here and now', a mind contains an idea that is:

the experience that is a synthesis of, being OK (= valid experience) and being not-OK (= invalid experience), is a normal reality that is made up partially of:

- a true reality that is being created by: a mind with clarity in operation ([Figure 1](#)) that contains valid experience in complete consciousness, and is being OK, seeing what is (= sanity), seeing an idea, knowing.

and partially of,

- a not-true reality that is being created by: a mind with confusion in operation ([Figure 2](#)) that contains invalid experience in partial consciousness, and is being not-OK, seeing what is rational (= rationalization), seeing part of an idea, not-knowing.



## **06: Transformation: the re-creating of The Self**

Expanding more on the possibility:

[The Exegesis Programme](#)[1] (a form of enlightenment programme) was a training programme that allowed a mind to transform invalid experience (= being not-OK) into valid experience (= being OK) by re-creating it completely in consciousness in a supportive environment. In other words, the programme allowed a mind to expand beyond the creating of experience in a normal reality - an almost lifelong habit, into the re-creating of total experience (= life/the self) in a true reality. A representation of the essential experience that was/is being re-created in the transformation process can be seen in [Figure 3](#).

- *“The Exegesis Programme has one purpose, and that is to allow you the participant, to establish the truth of your present reality, in order to harmonise with what is; that creates an opportunity to discover and reveal your innate capacity for joy, enthusiasm peace of mind and clarity.”*[2]

[The Exegesis Programme](#) (book), is a translation of the complete programme into a written form that facilitates the essential experience to be re-created by sharing[3] it.

### **Footnotes**

- 1) In the 1970s Robert D’Aubigny remodelled Werner Erhard’s EST (aka Erhard Seminar Training) program into the more UK friendly Exegesis programme. For background information see: [The Exegesis Seminar](#), 2014, by A.K. Webb; [The Book of EST](#), 2010, by Luke Rhinehart.
- 2) Extract from The Exegesis Programme pamphlet 1978 reproduced in trust in the introduction in [The Exegesis Programme](#), 1<sup>st</sup> edn., 2015, by Peter W.T. Bogacki.
- 3) **share**: re-create in essence (vocally with another person)

## **07: Making It Work: taking a look at what is doing the looking**

The development and validation of The Viable System Model (aka “The VSM”) by Stafford Beer[1] took place over a period of 30 years and was founded on the “*cybernetically proven fact that the regulator is as good as its contained model of the system regulated, and no more*”[2], a fact that applies to each one of us as individual organisms in an environment.

Here the underlying premise is, an organism (in an environment) is made up of two types of stuff: material and non-material, and the regulator/the manager (of both types) is the non-material stuff working as single whole/the self/intelligence/the rational with emotional mind/a mind/the systemic set of subsystems (aka the VSM[3]).

According to publicly available information in 2016 [The Exegesis Progamme](#)[4] is the sole book that contains a complete literal description of the systemic set of subsystems. And in the words of a contributor ...

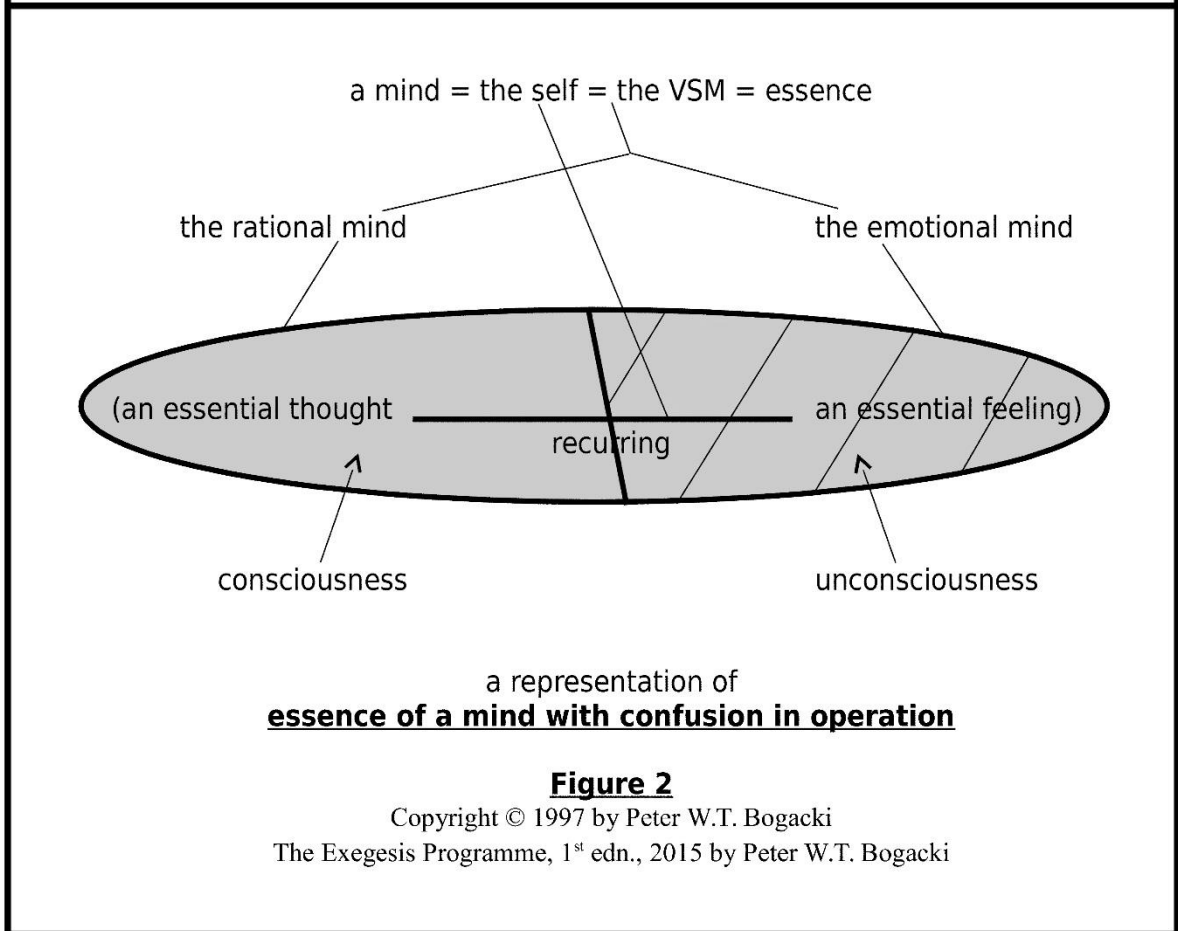
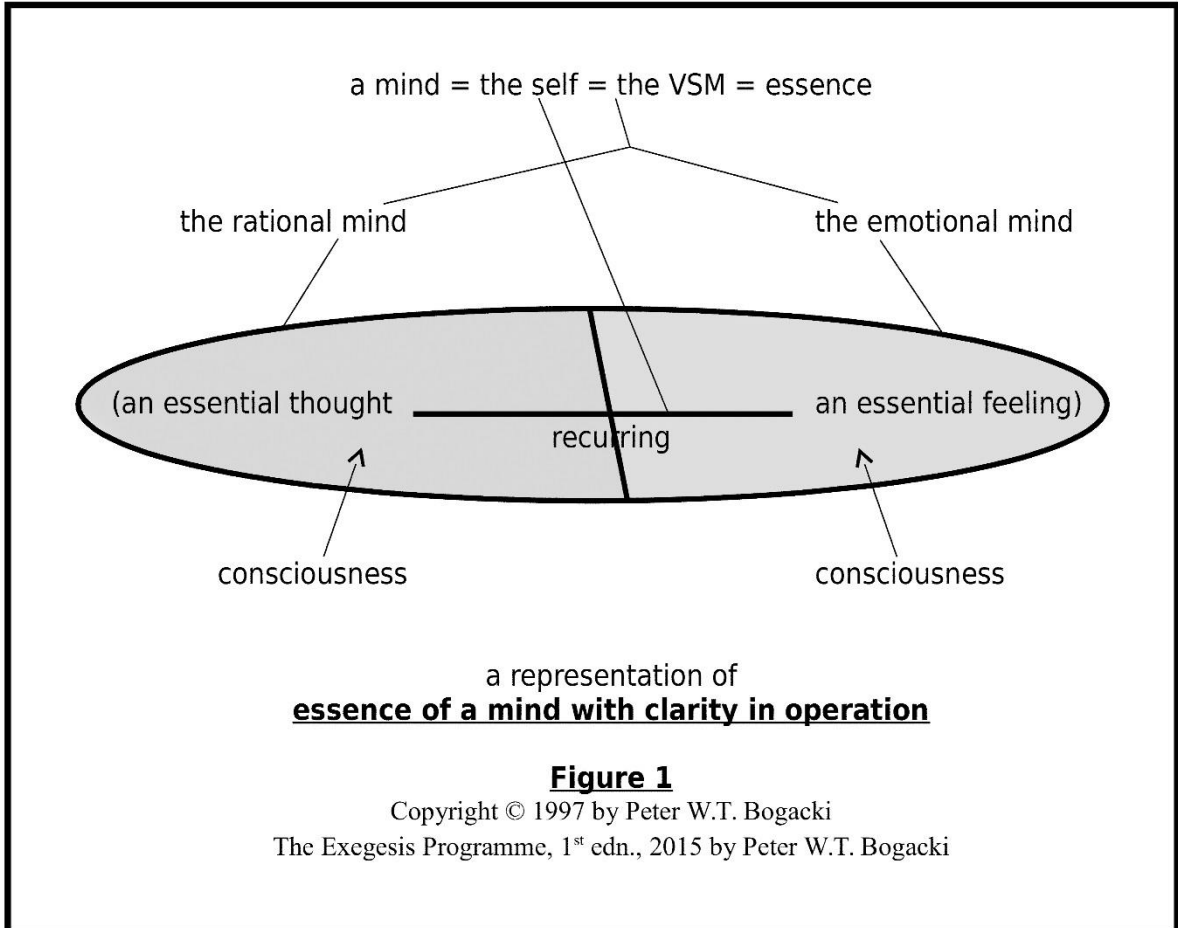
- *“it makes sense to me . . . clarity about connections between Beer’s subsystems . . . wished I’d had it before working through Beer’s books . . . would’ve saved me time as PhD student . . . contains the essence of Beer’s material”.*

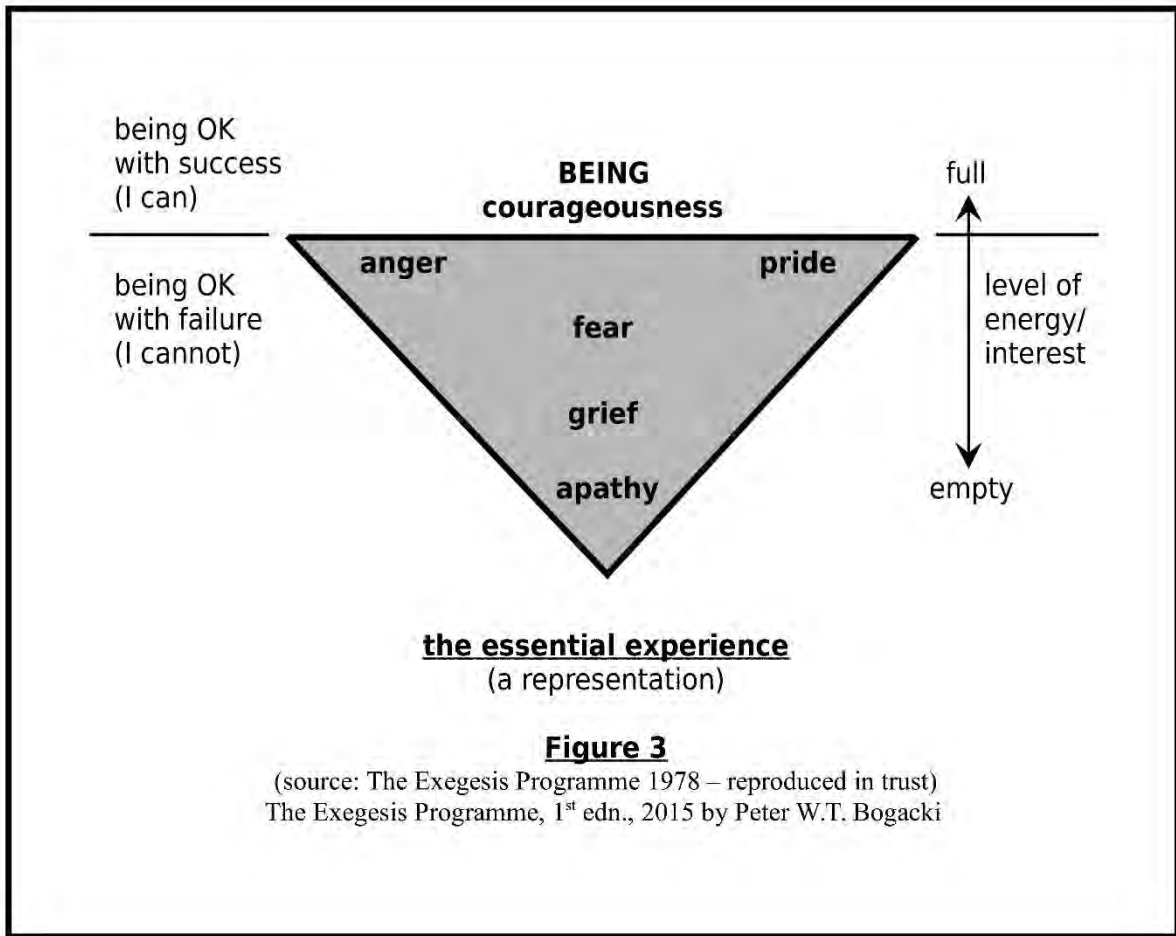
Seeing the complete model working literally and making sense in effect is something like looking in a mirror, taking a look at what is doing the looking. Each one of us can see himself in operation by using the rational with emotional mind as single whole ([Figure 1](#)). And we can re-create the essential experience ([Figure 3](#)) simply by working through and sharing[5] a complete literal mapping of Beer’s systemic set of subsystems ([Figure 4](#)) onto Beer’s essential system of communication and control ([Figure 5](#)). Here in truth, individuals with an attachment to use of the rational mind ([Figure 2](#)) avoid/resist the process and back off from the challenge because of feelings of separation being created in partial consciousness.

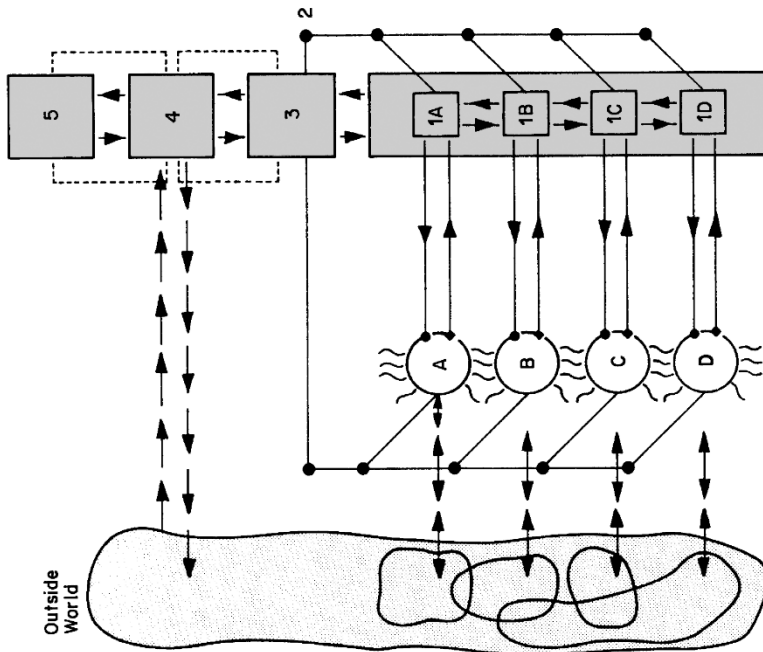
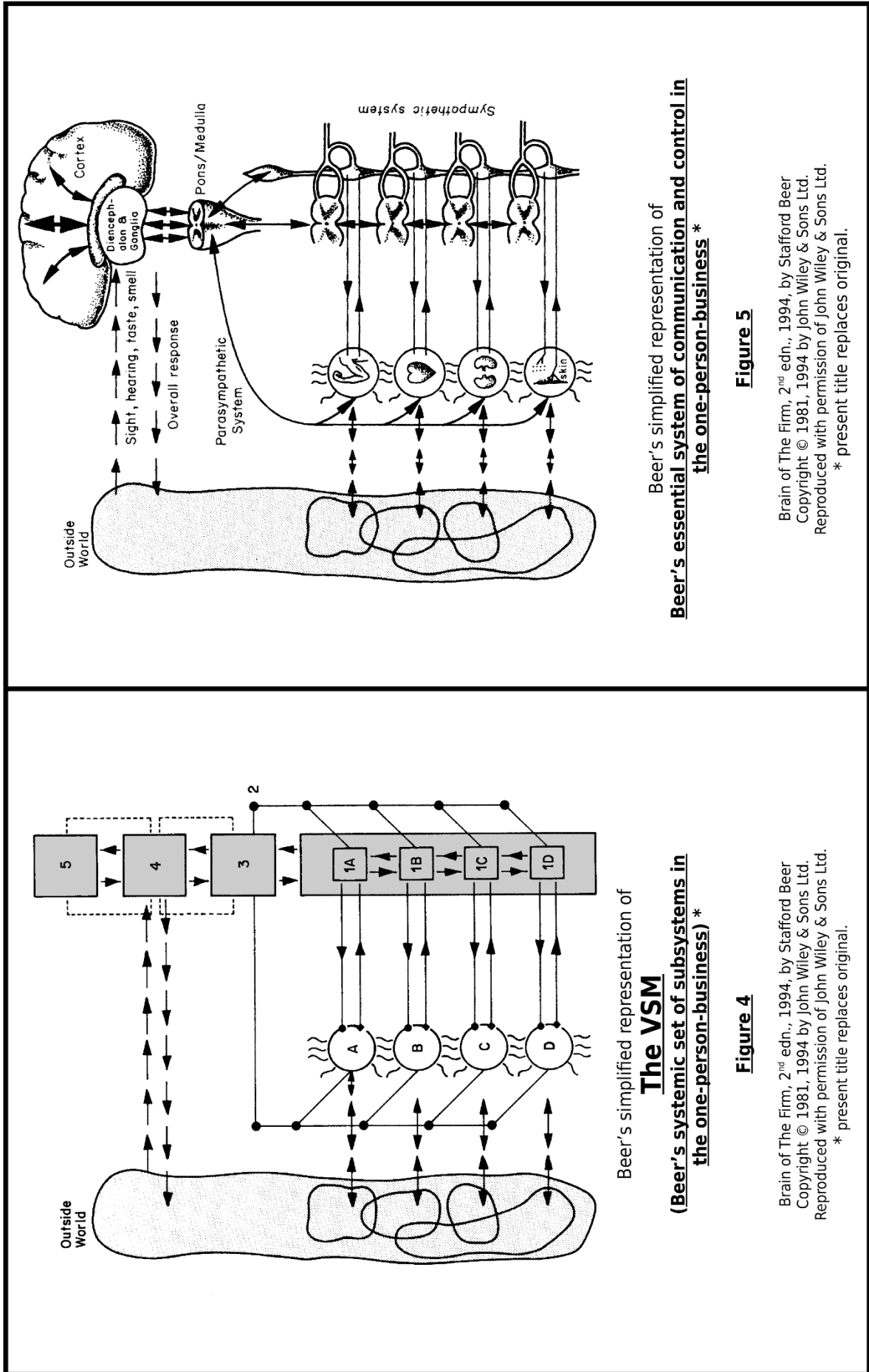
### **Footnotes**

- 1) “[The Viable System Model: Its Provenance, Development, Methodology and Pathology](#)”, Journal of the Operational Research Society, Vol. 25 No 1, 1984, pp. 7-25; also without diagram at [kybernetik.ch/dwn/Viable\\_System\\_Model.pdf](http://kybernetik.ch/dwn/Viable_System_Model.pdf)
- 2) p. 114, [The Heart of Enterprise](#), 1994, Beer, S.. Copyright © 1979, 1994 by John Wiley & Sons Ltd. Reproduced with permission of John Wiley & Sons Ltd.
- 3) The VSM is, the systemic set of five subsystems (recurring within itself).
- 4) [The Exegesis Progamme](#), 1<sup>st</sup> edn., 2015, by Peter W.T. Bogacki.
- 5) **share**: re-create in essence (vocally with another person)

# A Working Mind: Clarity and Confusion







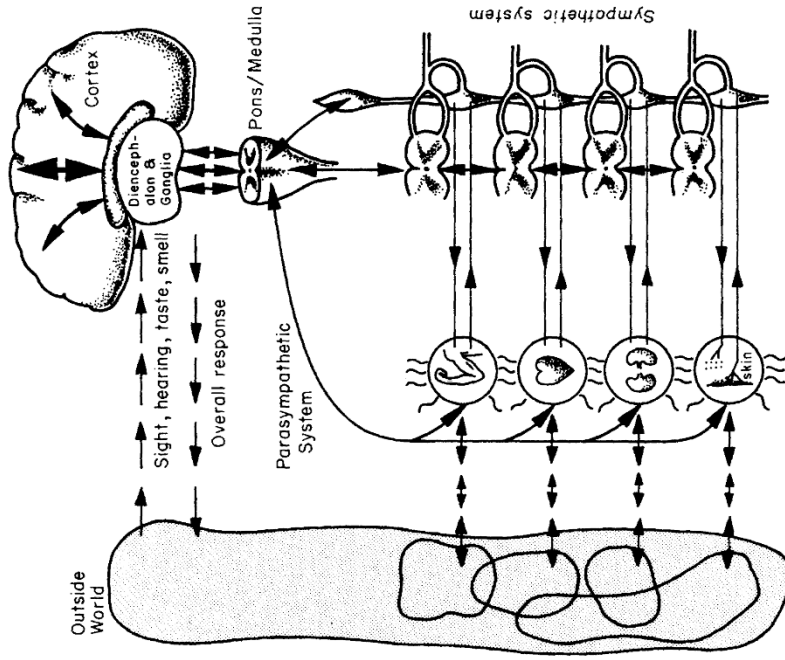
Beer's simplified representation of

**The VSM**

(Beer's systemic set of subsystems in the one-person-business) \*

**Figure 4**

Brain of The Firm, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn., 1994, by Stafford Beer  
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 \* present title replaces original.



Beer's simplified representation of

**Beer's essential system of communication and control in the one-person-business \***

**Figure 5**

Brain of The Firm, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn., 1994, by Stafford Beer  
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