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# Information Literacy and Epistemological Inquiry

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→ I am an inveterate doodler → can't think, otherwise

! Gregory Bateson and Paul Feyerabend

A hand-written -- and, drawn -- talk on information literacy.

especially spheres

1. Caveats.

2. I am here to talk. About:

- "information literacy" (faute de mieux)

- linearity vs. unpredictable recursive branching

[small e!] → epistemological inquiry

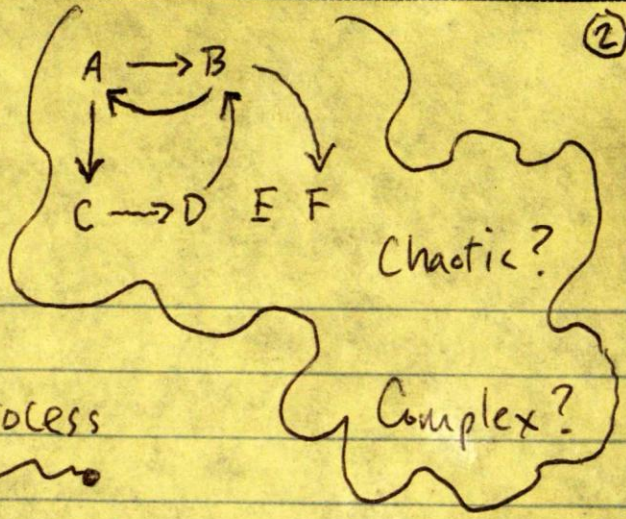
- librarians as educators

- discourse flattening

and dragons



might not get to all of that, quite



Straightforward?

$A \rightarrow B \rightarrow C$

Simple?

3. To

consider:

Product vs. Process

Seductive linearity

- linearity and language (Pinker. How the Mind Works)
- linearity and scholarly "products" (Nozick. Anarchy, State, and Utopia)
- linearity and language and thought (Bloch: "Lg, anthropology, and cognitive science")

Map is not territory

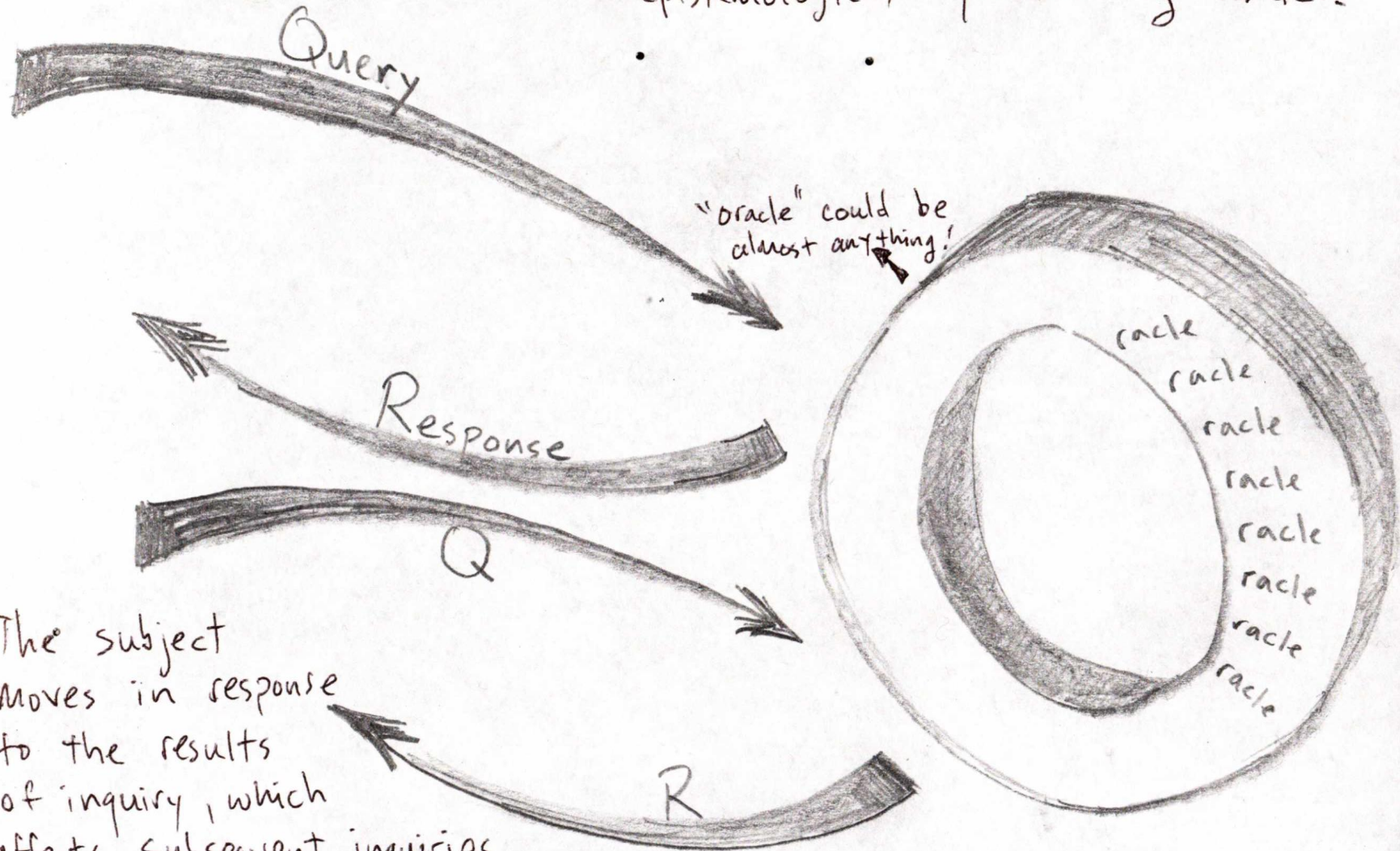
Organized, clean, linear articles suggest a faulty map of research process to undergraduates. Assignments don't often help.

# • Epistemological Inquiry •

- "What's out there" changes to "what's out there?"
- Rather than an attempt to approach a general "theory of knowledge," I'm interested in these inflections of epistemology:
  - A process of recursive interrogation and evaluation (Hintikka, "knowledge-seeking by questioning")
  - An untidy, personal, intuitive, creative process (Feyerabend, Against Method)
  - A highly individualized, gradually elaborated, increasingly complex process of intellectual development (Hofer, "Personal epistemology and culture")

so, Hjørland  
is addressed  
DISCIPLINARY  
epistemologies,  
+ that's for  
other day.)

This is a representation of Hintikka's epistemological questioning model.



The subject moves in response to the results of inquiry, which affects subsequent inquiries.

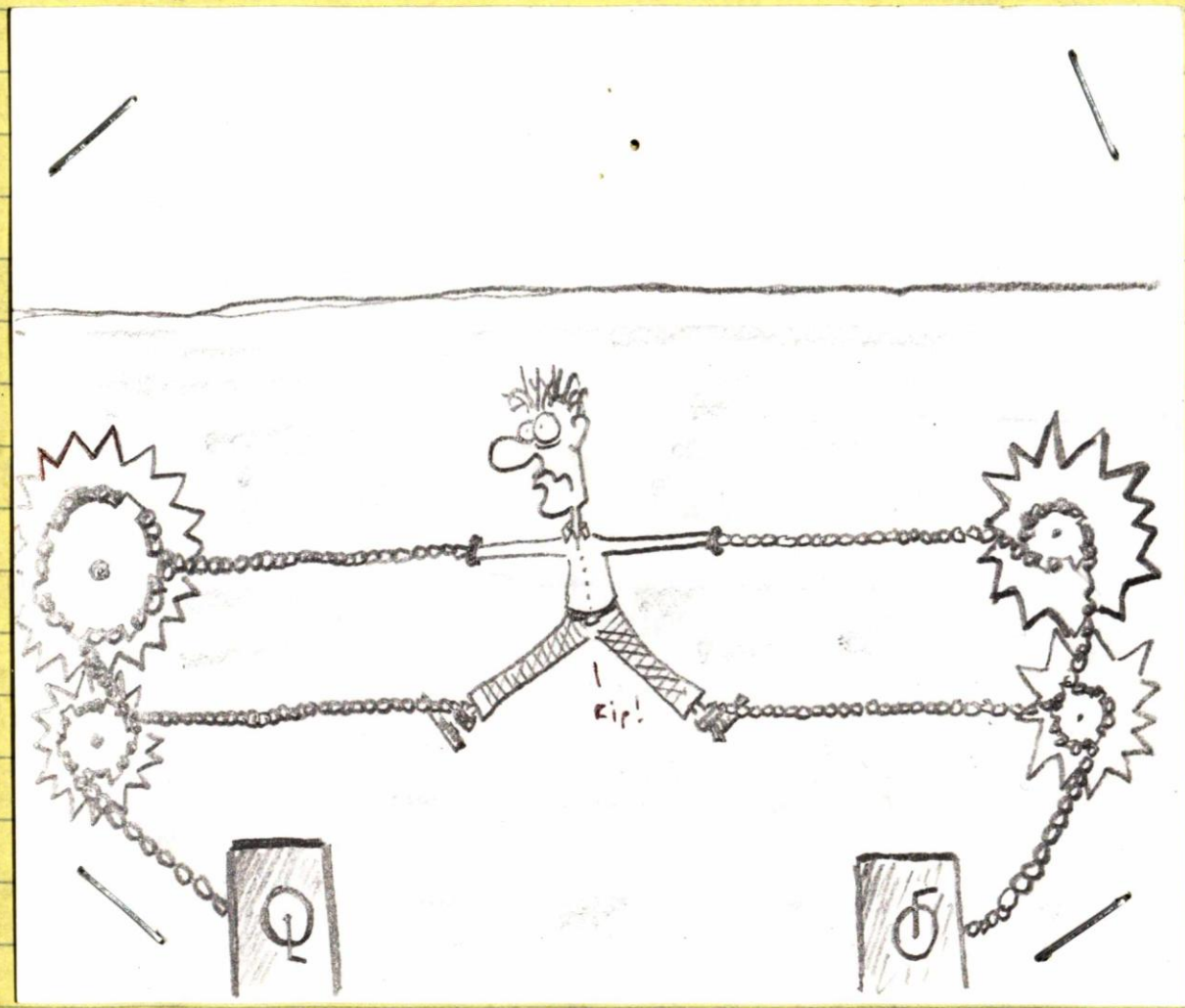
it's a non-linear feedback system.

it's true:

{ the Teaching Librarian has a uniquely Challenging Task }

everyone has heard about the "skillz" vs. "concepts" thing.

BUT we do need to ask ...

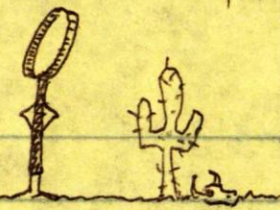


... whether what we teach has legs teeth substance portability actual value

↓  
once kids leave college.

growth opportunities!

# Students and the Research Process



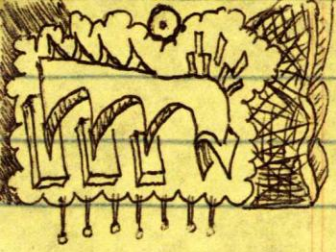
- Anecdotal matters.
- Problem of what Budd has called "ontological assumptions."  
(The Changing Academic Library)
- Chu's "wilderness" metaphor for the information landscape.  
("Navigating the Wilderness.")
- A new favorite: Holiday and Rogers, studying IL in a writing course, unpack (sorry!) these underlying assumptions:



Notably, these attitudes seemed also to be true of the teacher!

Sources are either good or bad. Sources are objective things that must simply be found. Sources are basically \*  
containers of information.  
 ("Talking about Information Literacy")





(re) Considering the role of

# SEARCH



- Dismissed as a "relatively lower-order intellectual skill" (Bodemer "The importance of search as an inter-textual practice in undergraduate research")

despite awareness that:

- "the location, evaluation, selection, and use process is continuous and recursive as long as the information need exists" (Harris and Millet, "Nothing to lose.")

(the garden of forking paths is not complex enough)

- Search during information retrieval always involves different "cognitive shifts" (Spink, "Cognitive shifts related to interactive IR")
- ACRL standards - implication?



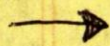
Backe:  
IL is invisible  
not sure



# Literacy: What is it?

- Non-stable; different literacies accumulate - it is

also should  
go  
backward.



"... always carrying along a... cacophonous mix of fading and ascending materials, practices and ideologies. Literacy is always in flux."

(Brandt, "Accumulating literacy")

Many libraries  
do this →  
BUT  
how is it  
often  
constrained?

- It makes sense to make sure that students' IL experiences include substantial and exploratory work in resources outside the traditional bailiwick of library tools.  
(Nazari + Webber, "Loss of faith in the origins of IL in e-environments")

I also ♥  
lexical ambiguity!

# Abetting an impoverished model

③  
This is  
how much  
this pres.  
changed!



"... a systematic account... replaces the real world of thought and action by a chimera. Believing what you read in a book on epistemology is like believing that the action on a stage of a theatre is all there is and that there are no people behind the scenes..."

In  
Against Method  
he raises  
a sound  
critique of  
pure scientific  
methodology

Feyerabend, from The Tyranny of Science, 113

"When we tell [students] 'in order to write about ideas, you need to find good sources and cite them ~~accurately~~ accurately,' finding and citing becomes the task; ideas are contained in the sources cited and only make an appearance through those sources."

yep, I mis-spelled something there.

Fister, "Sources of confusion"



- " ... It must be open to question whether searchers are willing to place total faith in 'black box' search engines whose retrieval mechanism or impact on their search output they do not understand."

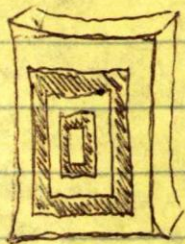
bad spider  
~~spider~~  
sorry


Andrew Large, Information-Seeking  
in the Online Age

- Students' "cognitive armory" should include knowing and actively thinking about the responses others are trying to elicit. (Clare Davies, Finding and Knowing)

or expecting

# A million "Books" • Or whatever



like, not books 

- What is the relationship between untellably vast information possibility and intellectual homogeneity?
- Stephen Ramsay - "The hermeneutics of screwing around" - might we call this the advantages of a stochastic discovery process?
- Canon or Creativity?
- Martin Mueller's "not reading" as a future methodology?

{hard or easy to believe?}