

A DISCUSSION OF CONTRIBUTIONS BY GREGORY BATESON AND CARL ROGERS VIA AN ANALYSIS OF TWO SEMINAL PAPERS

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ABSTRACT. *The paper begins with an examination of the logical premises on which Gregory Bateson and his associates based their "Double Bind" hypothesis of the etiology of schizophrenia. It goes on to demonstrate that in the specification of the hypothesis, the authors failed to adhere strictly to these premises with the result that confusion arose as to what was meant by a "double bind." Having located the source of confusion the paper then takes up Ackerman's point that the classical paradoxes, in which an incongruity in messages at different levels is buried in a single statement, is not an appropriate model for understanding interactional sequences. His alternative showing how classificatory type messages buried in interactional sequences can result in entangled communication is developed both to indicate the core of value in the "double bind" approach and to outline the wider implications of the issues involved. These wider implications are then brought out in an analysis of a logical defect in Carl Rogers's paper on "The Necessary and Sufficient Conditions for Therapeutic Personality Change." Finally it is shown that the "Reflection of Feeling Response" developed by Rogers and his students utilizes different levels of communication in achieving its effects.*

Two important and influential papers were published within a year of each other nearly forty years ago. They were:

1. Bateson, G., Jackson, D.D., Haley, J. and Weakland, J.H. (1956). Toward a Theory of Schizophrenia. *Behavioral Science*. Vol. 1, No. 4, 251-264.
2. Rogers, C.R. (1957). The Necessary and Sufficient Conditions for Therapeutic Personality Change. *Journal of Consulting Psychology*. Vol. 21, 95-103.

These papers were written from radically different standpoints. They also described dramatically contrasting processes in that one may be said to provide a recipe for promoting degenerate or pathological personality change, while the other provides a formula for promoting generative change or change toward personal fulfillment.

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In discussing the two papers, I want to outline some problematic areas in the formulation of the respective theories, to indicate some common ground between them and to draw some implications for our understanding of the interaction processes that promote personality change.

Since it had chronological priority and provides the easier way of leading into the issues I want to discuss, I will begin with the paper by Bateson et al. in which the Double Bind Theory of the genesis of schizophrenia is proposed.

This paper was the outcome of a research project financed by the Rockefeller Foundation. Bateson, at the time, had the position of ethnologist, with a charter to study anything he found interesting, at the Veterans Administration Hospital at Palo Alto. He was awarded the grant to study "The Role of the Paradoxes of Abstraction in Communication." The grant covered a two year period. With the funds provided he employed as research assistants Jay Haley, Bill Fry and John Weakland. The funds had just run out when the Double Bind hypothesis fell into place.

In order to appreciate the points I will be making, it is necessary to understand what is meant by the "paradoxes of abstraction" and the Theory of Logical Types whereby Russell and Whitehead resolved them.

Bateson, whose early anthropological work had brought him to the verge of cybernetics, was a member of the series of Macy Foundation Conferences on cybernetics held after the end of World War II. At these conferences which, he tells us, shaped everything he wrote subsequently, he was influenced by the mathematicians, John von Neumann and Norbert Wiener who introduced him to, among other things, Whitehead and Russell's Theory of Logical Types. Since Bateson makes reference to this theory in nearly everything he discusses, an outline of what it involves is necessary.

Whitehead and Russell were concerned with laying a sound logical basis for mathematics. Logical theory was flawed by the existence of some troublesome paradoxes which they wanted to elucidate and eliminate from their system. One such classical paradox was the assertion by the Cretan, Epimenides, that "all Cretans are liars."

They resolved the issue with their theory. An important paradox that inspired the theory is known as Russell's paradox. It has the following form.

First, divide the whole universe of events or objects into classes. So we have a class of cats, a class of houses, a class of verbs and so on. Most of these classes are not members of themselves. The class of cats is not a cat, the class of houses is not a house. But some classes are members of themselves. The class of concepts is a concept, the class of thinkable thoughts is a thinkable thought.

Now put into one class, which we will call A, all those classes which are members of themselves and into another class, which we will call B, all those classes that are not members of themselves.

Then, when we take the next step and ask whether B is a member of itself, we encounter paradox, for, if B is a member of itself it is not a member of itself and if B is not a member of itself, it is a member of itself.

This paradox is arrived at by strict logical deduction if we talk about classes as if they were at the same level of abstraction as their members. Russell proposed that the solution lay in distinguishing between two levels of language - an object language for the members and a meta language for the classes. Then classes are so defined that, in order to be a member of a class, an item must be of a lower order of abstraction than the class. This gives us the Theory of Logical Types which was stated as: "Whatever involves all of a collection must not be one of the collection" (Whitehead and Russell, 1910. p. 39).

Paradoxical Injunctions

Bateson and his team were aware that the Theory of Logical Types was breached frequently in everyday conversation. The most common examples consist of such injunctions as "be

spontaneous," "take no notice of me," "treat me as an equal," "feel free" and the like. All such injunctions pose paradox because buried in each such single statement is a conflict between two messages, one at the class level and the other at the member level. Each is a command (class), but the particular command in each case (member) contradicts the message qua class. The injunction "take no notice of me" can be rephrased "I command you to take notice of me." The imperative classificatory assertion "I command" requires that the recipient of the message pay attention and do what he or she is told, but the member message contradicts the message qua class.

Other examples of paradox are:

(1) A notice which reads: "do not read this notice." By its nature - the class of thing it is - a notice conveys the message: "Here is something to be read," but this particular member of the class of notices enjoins the message qua class.

(2) The classical paradox of the Cretan, Epimenides, arises from the contradiction between the class and member messages. Epimenides made an assertion. An assertion of its nature (class) professes to be a statement of truth, but this particular member assertion enjoins that claim.

Paradox vs. Straightforward Contradiction

Paradox, which involves a conflict between messages at different levels of abstraction, must be clearly distinguished from straightforward contradiction in which the conflict is between messages at the same level of abstraction.

Consider a hypothetical example provided by Haley (1963) in which a young man places his arm around a young lady who responds by saying "No, no," and at the same time snuggling up closer to him. As Haley says: "By snuggling up to him she would have qualified incongruently or denied her statement 'No, no' " (p. 7). But, despite this incongruence, this response does not involve paradox. The young woman is sending her friend contradictory messages, one in verbal form and one in non-verbal form, but they are both at the same level of abstraction. Neither message stands in the relation of class to the other as member.

The importance of the point being made here cannot be overemphasized. In interpersonal exchanges, people send messages of varying degrees of subtlety and in such diverse modes as tone of voice, facial expression, muscular tension, posture and gesture as well as through the spoken word. These different messages may qualify each other in various ways ranging from contradiction, as in the case of Haley's couple, to confirmation as when a punitive statement is made in an angry tone or a loving statement is accompanied by warm embraces. But the fact that messages qualify each other does not mean that they are of different levels of abstraction. In part the problems which have developed in respect of the Double Bind hypothesis stem from lack of clarity on this issue. In many quarters there has been a tendency to think that subtle, covert, non-verbal messages are of a different logical level - or different level of abstraction - from overt verbal messages which they qualify.

The importance of distinguishing between paradox and straightforward contradiction arises from the difference in the effect on the recipient of the message. When faced with contradiction, the person can act, he or she can respond to one message and ignore the other. They can seek more information before making a decision. In the case above of the young man with the coy lady, different options are open.

But when faced with paradox, the recipient is stuck. He or she has no options. Further information will not help. If they obey the injunction they disobey it and, if they disobey it, they obey it.

The Double Bind Hypothesis

This hypothesis was developed from the suggestion that schizophrenic behavior would be an appropriate response for a person continually subjected to paradoxical injunctions in a punitive

environment. As the authors put it: "He must live in a universe where the sequence of events are such that his unconventional communicational habits will be in some sense appropriate." (Bateson et al., 1956 pp. 253-54).

The hypothesis has six necessary ingredients. In summary form they are:

1. "Two or more persons." One of these is designated the victim.
2. "Repeated experience." The situation is a chronic one.
3. "A primary negative injunction." The victim is told to do or not do something under threat of punishment.
4. "A secondary injunction conflicting with the first at a more abstract level, and like the first enforced by punishment or signals which threaten survival."
5. "A tertiary negative injunction prohibiting the victim from leaving the field."
6. "Finally the complete set of ingredients is no longer necessary when the victim has learned to perceive his universe in double bind patterns." (p. 253-54).

The Vicissitudes of the Double Bind Hypothesis

When the hypothesis was published it attracted a lot of attention and was hailed as offering a new and penetrating insight into those aspects of parent child interaction which engendered psychopathology in the offspring. Its apparently precise, though complex, formulation was seen as pinpointing aspects of behavior that could be subjected to rigorous study.

Although the broad pattern of thinking that gave rise to the hypothesis has flourished, particularly in the area of family therapy, the specific hypothesis itself has failed to live up to its early promise. It has stimulated little rigorous research directed towards its validation and such research as has been conducted has, in general, produced disappointing results.

Controversy has developed in regard to different aspects of the formulation. The term "double bind" came to mean different things to different people to the point where we have Haley, one of the two surviving authors, telling us:

"I largely discarded the term double bind and returned to Gregory Bateson's original term 'paradox.' I found I did not know what a double bind was anymore, because so many people used it in so many different ways. Paradox is a clearer and more precise term for describing conflicting levels of communication" (1980, p. 24).

Although the term has largely dropped out of use in professional circles, these remain lingering convictions that a valuable insight has been lost somewhere in the formulation of the hypothesis. Without attempting to review the literature that has been devoted to this issue, but following Ackerman (1979), I will argue that the formulation was defective in:

1. Failing to provide precise criteria for determining the level of abstraction of a message.
2. Using language appropriate to a lineal causal, rather than to an interactive reciprocal causal, view of human relationships.

When these defects are remedied, a new and useful understanding of interpersonal communication emerges from the basic insight of double bind theory.

1. Lack of precise criteria

The critical ingredient in the formulation of the hypothesis is No. 4 - the secondary injunction at a more abstract level that conflicts with the first. The authors are extremely vague as to what constitutes "more abstract." In their elaboration on this ingredient they say: "This secondary injunction is more difficult to describe than the primary for two reasons. First, the secondary injunction is commonly communicated to the child by non-verbal means. Posture, gesture, tone of voice, meaningful action, and the implications concealed in verbal comment may all be used to convey this more abstract message. Second, the secondary injunction may impinge upon any

element of the primary prohibition. Verbalization of the secondary injunction may, therefore include a wide variety of forms for example, 'Do not see this as punishment'; 'Do not see me as the punishing agent'; 'Do not submit to my prohibitions'; 'Do not think of what you must not do'; 'Do not question my love of which the primary prohibition is (or is not) an example'; and so on. Other examples become possible when the double bind is inflicted not by one individual but by two. For example one parent may negate at a more abstract level the injunctions of the other" (pp. 253-54).

While this statement hints at what is meant, it certainly does not tell us how to identify a "more abstract" level injunction. However, later in the paper, in describing a family situation that fits their formulation, they give us a clearer idea of what they have in mind. In this example, the binding agent is a mother who cannot tolerate emotional closeness. At the same time, she believes that a mother should have a warm loving relationship with her child. Consequently, when the child approaches close to her, she sends it cold rejecting messages that push it away, but when it is at a safe distance from her and her anxiety is lowered, she sends it warm affectionate messages. As the authors put it:

If the mother begins to feel affectionate and close to her child, she begins to feel endangered and must withdraw from him; but she cannot accept this hostile act and to deny it must simulate affection and closeness with her child. The important point is that her loving behavior is then a comment on (since it is compensation for) her hostile behavior and consequently it is of a different order of message than the hostile behavior - it is a message about a sequence of messages. Yet by its nature it denies the existence of those messages it is about, i.e. the hostile withdrawal.

The mother uses the child's responses to affirm that her behavior is loving and, since the loving behavior is simulated, the child is placed in the position where he must not accurately interpret her communication if he is to maintain his relationship with her. In other words, he must not discriminate accurately between orders of message, in this case the difference between the expression of simulated feelings (one Logical Type) and real feelings (another Logical Type). As a result the child must systematically distort his perception of meta-communicative signals. (p. 257)

This is a complex and confusing statement, but, stripped to its essentials, it asserts that intrapsychic events in the mother define the logical level of the messages she sends. But this cannot be. As I went to some pains to make clear, one message is of a more abstract level (higher logical type) than another message (lower logical type) when, and only when, it stands in the relation of class to the other as member. This is obviously not the case in the example above. By no stretch of the imagination could we agree that the mother's rejecting message is a member of the class of warm affectionate messages as the authors seem to be asserting.

In the example, the mother is sending contradictory messages of the same level of abstraction. Her motivation for sending the messages has nothing to do with their logical levels nor does it have any relevance for the level of abstraction whether or not the messages are sincere.

The confusion in regard to this matter of levels of abstraction seems to be related to the use, or misuse, of the term meta-communication which has had wide currency among double bind theorists.

Meta-communication

The term meta means about and the term meta-communication is usually taken to mean communication about communication. So, if one person points out inconsistencies in another person's messages, he is said to be meta-communicating. Thus, in Haley's example of the amorous couple, if the young man were to point out to his companion that she was sending him contradictory messages, he would be meta-communicating. He would be communicating about her communication. More specifically, he would be treating her messages as instances of a generalization about her inconsistent communication. It was part of the Double Bind theory that the victim was precluded from such meta-communication. That is, he was not allowed to point out the contradictory nature of the messages he was receiving.

However, the Double Bind theorists defined the term more broadly. So we have Haley (1959) telling us: "when any piece of communication is about, or qualifies, another piece of communication, they can be said to be of different levels" (p. 362).

As Ackerman (1979), to whom I am indebted, puts it: "Haley's usage is too general. The fact that one message (statement) comments upon, 'qualifies' or is 'about' another does not entail that the two messages are of different logical types" (p. 33).

Stressing that comments which raise logical type issues need to be distinguished clearly from comments that proceed at the same logical level, Ackerman gives us the following "interchange which specifically exploits logical type distinctions.

"Person 1: 'You're angry!'

"Person 2: (angrily) 'No I'm not!'

"Person 1: 'You see!' " (p. 33)

Ackerman points out that the first two statements function on the same logical level. One person makes an assertion and the other denies it verbally while indicating anger by the tone of voice. But the third statement functions differently. The comment "you see!" implies that Person 2's remark is an instance (lower logical type) of the generalization about his feeling state (higher logical type). He continues:

It appears that Haley's very general definition of meta communication blurs the distinction between communication in general and that subset of comments in which questions are raised about the logical status of previous comments. Given that logical type theory is the cornerstone of the double bind hypothesis, it would appear more economical and consistent to choose a definition of meta communication that confines the term to comments that raise logical type issues. The following definition of meta communication is suggested.

Meta communication: Message A is meta to message B only if it classifies message B thereby relegating the message it classifies to the status of member. (p. 33)

If this definition of meta-communication is accepted and observed, one of the problematic aspects of the double bind hypothesis will be resolved. There is, however, a second aspect which we must now consider.

2. Inappropriate language

The second defect in the original formulation was the use of a language more appropriate to a lineal causal than to an interactive reciprocal causal perspective on interpersonal communication. Although the authors were persons who, at a theoretical level, subscribed to a circular, or feedback, model, they phrased their theory in lineal sequence terms. The schizophrenic was seen as responding to the imposition of paradoxical injunctions. There was a binder and a bound. Parents were portrayed as causing the problem and the child as the helpless victim. It was some time before it became apparent to the originators of the theory and others that the formulation was in conflict with their basic epistemological position.

When it did they began to tell us that it was incorrect to speak of a binder and a victim, and that we should formulate the situation as a system in which both parties are caught in a bind. The child patient is binding the parents as much as the parents are binding the child.

While this reciprocal binding view is consistent with the "epistemology of cybernetics" to which the authors subscribed, it is difficult to see how it can be formulated in terms of paradoxical injunctions such as "be spontaneous." These single statement paradoxes do not fit an interactional or recursive model. Their effect is unidirectional from the speaker to the person addressed. They presume a lineal causal sequence. A new formulation which reveals how the different logical levels can come into play in interactional sequences and cause havoc in the relationships between the participants is required. Ackerman has offered such a formulation.

Let us return to his example where Person 1 in his second statement reduces Person 2's denial of his anger to the status of being an instance of the previous generalization about his feeling state. Consider Person 2's subsequent options. There are four.

- i. They can concede that Person 1 is right.
- ii. They may continue to argue, probably with increasing anger, that they are not angry, to which Person 1 can continue with "you see!" type responses.
- iii. They may leave the field.
- iv. They may respond with a counter meta-communication. They may say something like "go to hell, smartarse!" This would classify Person 1's "you see!" as smartarse behavior.

The person who meta-communicates takes a power or one up position in the relationship. When one person responds to another's message by classifying it as an instance of a generalization about that other person's behavior, that person:

- i. Places that other person in the role of performer to herself or himself as audience.
- ii. Deprives the assertions made by the other of any status as statements of truth or reality, and reduces them to the status of being merely examples that illustrate the truth of a generalization about their behavior.

In respect of the first point, it is to be noted that, providing the audience can comment on the performance and such comment has relevance for the performer, the audience occupies the power position in the relationship. Since I have discussed this issue at considerable length elsewhere, (Pentony, 1981), I will not pursue it further here.

In respect of the second point, the relegation of one's messages to the status of being merely instances of some generalization made about one's behavior is ordinarily a frustrating experience. Examples of such occurrences include: (a) the child who tries to tell their mother about some exciting experience and gets some such response as "I wish you wouldn't interrupt when I'm busy"; (b) the person who tries to air a grievance and is told to "stop whining"; (c) the enthusiastic

subordinate who makes some suggestion to a superior about improving an aspect of the work organization and gets the reply, "you trying to teach me my job?"

We can surmise that a person living in a punitive environment where they are constantly subjected to such meta/communicative responses and are unable to comment on them (that is counter meta-communicate) will have great difficulty in developing initiative, self confidence and self esteem. A person in such a predicament would seem distinctly prone to degenerative personality change.

Herein lies both the core of truth or value in the fundamental insight of the double bind authors and the source of error in their formulation. They were correct in recognizing that incongruity between messages at different logical levels could have serious consequences for interpersonal relationships and personal development. They were in error in taking as their paradigm the paradoxical injunction in which the incongruity is lost in the single statement. They missed the point of the incongruity that could be buried in an interactional sequence.

The point is that when one person treats another person's communication as an instance of a generalization about that other person's behavior, they assume a position of power from which to influence the other's perception of self and reality. Unless the other responds by commenting on the first person's communication - that is, by treating it in turn as an instance of a generalization about that person's behavior - they concede the power position in the relationship.

In many cases the second person is unable to make such comment. In some instances it is interdicted on the basis that it would constitute insolence, insubordination or ingratitude. Often, however, it is due to the fact that the recipient of meta-communicative messages is unaware of what is happening. In the subtle and complex flow of interpersonal communication, the participants are often unaware of how they are influencing and being influenced by each other's messages. It is certainly the case that few people have a grasp of the theory of Logical Types that would enable them to utilize it in analyzing each other's messages.

With respect to the double bind hypothesis, I would suggest a rephrasing to the effect that a child growing up in an environment which is chronically punitive, where the parents consistently meta-communicate in response to the child's messages and where the child is unable to comment on the parents' messages, the child can be expected to develop serious personality problems.

Meta-communication and conflict

Meta-communication occurs in all relationships including those offering warmth, encouragement and support. However, before closing our discussion of the double bind paper which was concerned with destructive interchanges, we can look briefly at pathological communication between marriage partners.

We have already noted that when a person is subjected to an unwelcome generalization of their behavior, the options open to them are limited. One of these is to counter meta-communicate. When this has the effect of drawing the other person's attention to what they are doing, it may lead to better mutual understanding. However, where there is already strain in the relationship, it is likely to take the form of an uncomplimentary classification of the other's behavior or person, perhaps including name calling. In this regard we can note that a name, even a personal name, is the class of which particular persons or items are members. The name Tom Jones is the class of which this or that individual who bears it is a member. It will be apparent that mutual negative categorization of each other can escalate in relationships where there is a measure of equality as in the case of marriage partners.

A point of importance is that, in human relationships, the message levels are rarely made explicit. As a result, the recipient of a message may be in doubt as to its intended level. Consider a statement such as "the lawn needs mowing" made by a wife to her spouse. Depending on the quality of their relationship, this may be taken merely as a descriptive statement of the condition of the lawn, or as a classifying statement about the behavior of the spouse such as, "you are an

irresponsible loafer who neglects the chores around the house and one instance of this is the unkempt state of the lawn." The husband who hears the message in the latter terms is likely to respond with some such comment as "for God's sake, stop nagging," thereby classifying his wife's comment as nagging behavior.

As family therapists are aware, couples can engage in such exchanges to the point of driving one another crazy. A troublesome feature of such tangled interactions is that, once they develop, any effort by either partner to change the nature of the interaction and restore amicable relations is likely to be classified by the other as a maneuver within the ongoing quarrel and responded to accordingly. So, if one were to say "look, we are both too upset to resolve this matter now so let us leave it until we are calmer," the other is likely to retort, "there you go again trying to evade the issue."

We can note that, in exchanges, various non verbal cues such as tone of voice, facial expression, previous exchanges and the like will play a part in determining the level of message *as heard*. These cues do not classify the verbal part of the message and as was stressed above, are not of a more abstract level than the verbal content. They are additional information, an elaboration of the verbal content - which helps the recipient to decide whether a comment, such as "the lawn needs mowing," is to be taken as a simple descriptive statement or as a classification of the other's behavior. To this extent only do such cues have a role in determining the logical level of a message. They help the *recipient* to classify it.

In somewhat different terms, such events which accompany or precede the specific message whose "meaning" is in question are elements of the context of that message.

In closing the discussion of the double bind paper, we can note the relationship between the four terms "context," "classification," "generalization" and "meaning" which have figured in it. In my usage, context is the set of objectively observable events that accompany or precede a specific communication and thus qualify it. It is often said that context determines the meaning of an event, but I question this view. Two observers of the same event (hence having the same context) are likely to give it different meanings depending on their respective histories. What is seen as a friendly gesture by one may be perceived as patronizing by the other. It is the individual who gives meaning to a communication and they do so by the process of classification. Classification is the process of arriving at a generalization, that is of treating an event as an instance of a generalization.

Generalization plays an important role in our understanding of ourselves and the universe we inhabit. It is the means whereby we impose order and structure. Without generalization we would live in a chaotic world of unpredictable occurrences. The order imposed by the great generalizations of science (e.g. Newton's Laws of Motion) illustrates the importance of the process.

When applied to human behavior, the use of classification can have both negative and positive consequences. We have been considering the case where a child growing up in a punitive environment is subject to derogatory classification of their behavior. Such a child can be expected to develop a generalized self perception involving low self esteem and self confidence. In contrast, we would expect a child growing up in a supportive environment, where the classificatory comments convey acceptance, appreciation and encouragement, to develop a self perception characterized by a sense of worth and competence. This brings us to the paper by Carl Rogers.

Rogers's Paper

In contrast to that of Bateson et al., Rogers's (1957) hypothesis proved to be extremely productive. It stimulated a large volume of research, resulted in the publication of several monographs and innumerable articles in periodicals and gave rise to training programs around the world.

Although most readers will be familiar with the core statement in the paper, I will reproduce it since I want to point out a problematic aspect of it. It reads:

For constructive personality change to occur it is necessary for these conditions to exist and continue over a period of time.

1. Two persons are in psychological contact.
2. The first person whom we shall term the client is in a state of incongruence, being vulnerable or anxious.
3. The second person, whom we shall term the therapist, is congruent or integrated in the relationship.
4. The therapist experiences unconditional positive regard for the client.
5. The therapist experiences empathic understanding of the client's internal frame of reference and endeavors to communicate this experience to the client.
6. The communication to the client of the therapist's empathetic understanding and unconditional positive regard is to a minimal degree achieved. (p. 96)

On the surface, in comparison with the complexity of the double bind hypothesis, this formulation is a model of lucidity and simplicity. Nevertheless, as I have pointed out elsewhere, (Pentony 1972, 1981) it contains an anomaly. As formulated two of the conditions, 4 and 5, are unnecessary. They are redundant. Condition 6 makes them so.

The point is not immediately obvious, largely because of the way condition 6 has been worded. However, later in the paper Rogers elaborates a little on this condition. He tells us:

The final condition as stated is that the client perceives, to a minimal degree, the acceptance and empathy which the therapist experiences for him. Unless some communication of these attitudes has been achieved, then such attitudes do not exist in the relationship as far as the client is concerned, and the therapeutic process could not, by our hypothesis, be initiated.

Since the attitudes cannot be directly perceived, it might be somewhat more accurate to state that therapist behaviors and words are perceived by the client as meaning that to some degree the therapist accepts and understands him. (p. 99)

Once we accept this statement, it becomes clear that condition 6 makes conditions 4 and 5 redundant. If the client does not perceive the therapist's empathic understanding and unconditional positive regard, then it is immaterial whether they are present or not. But equally, if the client does perceive the therapist as being empathically understanding and having unconditional positive regard for them, it is immaterial whether they are present or not. Condition 6 overrides conditions 4 and 5 and renders them irrelevant.

It may be argued that condition 6 cannot be satisfied unless conditions 4 and 5 are met. There is not logical basis for such a claim. Rogers obviously believed that the client could be mistaken in failing to perceive empathic understanding and positive regard when these are present. Otherwise there would be no point in including condition 6. But if the client can be mistaken in one direction, he can, surely, be mistaken in the other.

The interesting point for us is how condition 6 comes to have the power to override conditions 4 and 5. The answer is hinted at in the second paragraph of Rogers's elaboration on condition 6. The client perceives the signals coming from the therapist as meaning acceptance and understanding. Put otherwise, the client classifies these signals as instances of the generalization that the therapist is (or is not) accepting and understanding of him or her. Classification of events

assigns meaning to them. In terms of the language used in the discussion of the double bind paper, conditions 4 and 5 are of a different (lower) logical type from condition 6 (higher) logical type.

I may seem to be stretching a point in discussing perception in terms of logic. We can, however note Bateson's claim.

A priori it can be argued that all perception and all response, all behavior and all classes of behavior, all learning and all genetics, all neurophysiology and endocrinology, all organization and all evolution - one entire subject matter - must be regarded as communicational in nature, and therefore subject to the great generalizations or 'laws' which apply to communicative phenomena. We therefore are warned to expect to find in our data those principles of order which fundamental communication theory would propose. The Theory of Logical Types, Information Theory, and so forth, are expectably to be our guides. (1972, pp. 282-83)

The relation between event and perception of the event parallels that between member and class. Indeed a strong case can be made for treating perception as a classifying process (cf Hayek 1952). Like classes, perceptions are hierarchically ordered, so we have event, perception of event, perception of perception of event and so forth.

An intriguing confirmation of the logical hierarchical order of such sequences is provided by the work of Lefebvre (1972, 1977). He developed "a formal notation to register the extent to which in a given situation a number of actors 'assimilate' or 'replicate' each other's inner worlds and the underlying reality" (1977, p. 36). This is a formal system modeled after mathematics and formal logic that enables reflexive propositions of the type "I see you," "I see you seeing me," "I see you seeing me seeing you" and so forth, to be translated into abstract symbols by means of which it is possible to carry out operations far more complex than can be carried out in natural language. In line with mathematical tradition, Lefebvre's interest is not in the content, but in the reflexive structures whereby the content is processed. His system of algebraic polynomials enables him to represent these structures and their functioning without having to take into account the material that is reflected.

While Lefebvre has some points to make about interpersonal perception and control, our interest is in his demonstration that perception sequences can be represented in rigorous terms.

To return to Rogers's paper, the redundancy in his formulation does not affect his basic argument that to meet with deep acceptance and understanding from another constitutes an enhancing and growth experience for the person. What it does is alert us to the logical issues that arise in interpersonal perception. In particular, it draws our attention to the logical typing involved when one person tells another his perception of the latter's communication as occurs in the "reflection of feeling" response.

Half a century ago the reflection of feeling response was the hall mark of client or person centered therapy. In the intervening years it has come to be widely adopted by therapists of all persuasions. In the process it has become commonplace and lost something of its mystique. As one who found it an effective way of responding to clients - particularly those who were in a state of distress or confusion - I have had an interest in the logic of its operation.

This response, in which an effort is made to capture and express the essential meaning for the client of the events and experiences he discusses, has many variations in wording. Gordon (1951) has given us the following sample of phrases with which a person centered leader "is constantly prefixing his comments:

You are saying. . .

You feel . . .

If I understand you correctly . . .

I'm not sure I follow you, but is this it . . .

I gather you mean . . .

Let's see if I really understand that . . . (p. 350)

The prefixing phrase is often omitted when it is clear that the therapist or leader is speaking for the client or group member as in the following exchange (also from Gordon):

B. Trouble is you should give us something to work on. This way we will get all mixed up. Nobody knows what to talk about. Give us a definite point.

Leader. It is kind of uncomfortable just to feel free to talk about anything you want to. You almost want me to tell you what to talk about.
(Ibid p. 341)

In this particular case, and in all cases where the above prefixing phrases are employed, the therapist or leader treats the other's communication as an instance of a generalization about that other's feeling state. In stating his perception of what the member is experiencing, the leader meta-communicates - he communicates about the communication and does not respond to it on its own level. In the case of the exchange with B, the leader might have refused the request or he might have argued with B with regard to the points the latter was making. In such cases, he would have been responding at the same logical level. But he does not do this. He proceeds to a higher or more abstract level and labels B's message as an instance of the generalization that B feels uncomfortable at being free to talk about anything he wants to. Whether or not there is any merit in the points B is making is treated as being irrelevant.

In thus moving to a more abstract or more general level, the therapist controls the interaction toward the end of helping the client to generalize beyond the particular event or situation. As I suggested above, generalization is related to the creation of order and the formation of meaning.

The client centered response is not unique among therapeutic interventions in constituting a meta-communication. Many such interventions operate on this basis. The psychoanalytic interpretation in which communications from the patient are treated as instances of the generalization of being manifestations of transference is an obvious example. The role of such interpretations in giving new meaning to symptomatic behavior will be readily appreciated.

What does distinguish the reflection of feeling response as contrasted with other therapeutic interventions is, of course, the effort to stay within the client's frame of reference. The generalization stays close to the client's subjective formulation. So much is this the case that the therapist may seem to be merely repeating what the client is saying when, in fact he or she is classifying and in the process generalizing what the client is expressing.

An effective reflection of feeling response may summarize in a brief sentence a long and complex account by the client of his or her experiences. In doing so, like all good generalizations, it simplifies and gives order and structure to the confused tangle of ideas and thoughts the client is grappling with. Insofar as it is closely in touch with his or her own thinking, such a response is welcomed by the client and leads to further exploration and further clarifying generalizations from the therapist.

It will be apparent that I see therapy as a process of changing the meaning for the client of the events in his or her life. Albert Ellis tells us that it is not the actual events in her or his life that cause the client distress, but what he or she tells her or himself about those events. I would rephrase this by saying that it is the way the individual classifies the events - the meaning he or she accords them - that causes the distress. The "cure" lies in changing the meaning. The critical question is how this is to be achieved. I hope I have indicated how I believe the client centered reflection of feeling response contributes to this end.

The discovery and development of this response was a major technical innovation in psychotherapy. If he had done nothing else, Carl Rogers would deserve to be remembered for this contribution.

Some Common Ground

We have been considering two papers which, on the surface, have little in common. They share, however, in a concern with the operation of interpersonal influence that determines the sense of worth and well being of the individual subjected to it.

The exertion of influence by one person on another is an issue of some complexity. It is achieved by communication. Communication is a multi-level phenomenon. In our attempts to analyze and understand it, we have, in the Theory of Logical Types, a useful guide.

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