

REJOINER: RESPONSE TO GAYLIN

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Communication systems and feedback loops appear technical. It is difficult to apply them to human nature as Bateson suggests. After all, communications engineers have launched humankind the age of information, robotics and computers. What have we gained? What have we forfeited? Has our innate desire for spiritual growth been compromised? The Dali Lama maintains that where science and spirituality meet, there is hope. The science of physics and human nature are not so different. They both compartmentalize and simplify in order to explain. They both draw on inferences.

The therapist utilizes empathy and mutual positive regard in a complimentary fashion while developing a therapeutic bond. The client finds a source of strength and trust in this bond. The alcoholic client moves from the symmetrical relationship with his pseudo ego while drinking to a complimentary therapeutic relationship that is greater than himself. This new relationship represents an epistemological shift or change.

The problem remains that the whole family is embedded in rigid system where all persons (components, no pun intended) are affected and in need of some type of treatment. Families with alcoholic members or with other illnesses are bound to their roles and behaviors. The chances are that a recovering family member will relapse if their role in the system is unchanged. Feedback loops are a very simplified method of looking at families. The family unit seeks comfortability or homeostasis. Old behaviors, rules, beliefs, style of communication and so forth are the negative feedback loops that keep a family bound and rigid. Distress is exactly the positive energy necessary to break this vicious cycle. Just as individuals seek treatment, so do families as a whole.

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