

(Chapter in BOOK)

**Nothing More Theoretical Than Good Practise:
Teaching for Self-Organised Learning**

by:

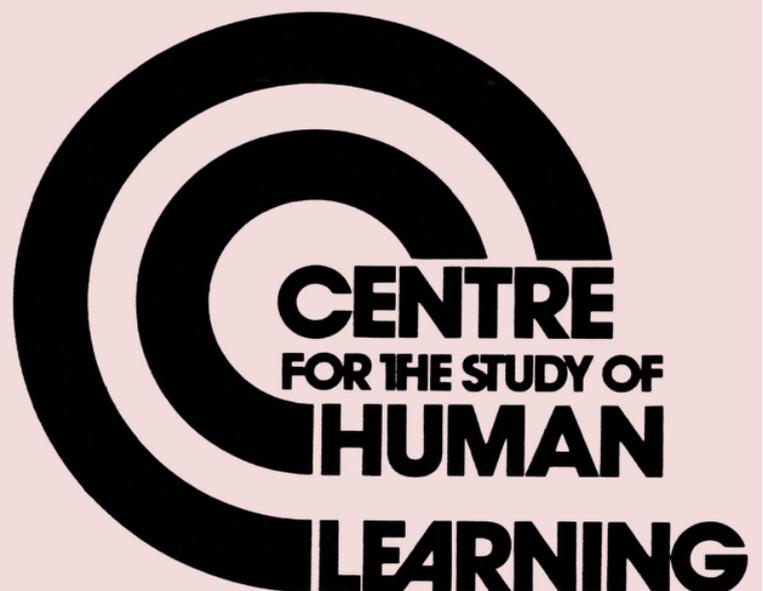
Laurie F. Thomas

in:

New Issues and Approaches in Personal Construct Theory

Don Bannister (Ed.)

Centre for the Study of Human Learning
(C.S.H.L.) Oxford. UK



Nothing More Theoretical Than Good Practise: Teaching for Self-Organised Learning

Laurie F. Thomas

Centre for the Study of Human Learning, Brunel University, Uxbridge.

HOW ARE GIFTED TEACHERS MADE?

This paper sets out to refute the idea that "gifted" teachers are born, not made. It is argued that teachers are made, but that we are not yet fully conversant with the process of construction. It is also suggested that what is true of teachers is also true of therapists, trainers, tutors, consultants, counsellors and coaches. The primary task of all these practitioners is to enable others to learn. The best of them aim to do this in the fullest and most complete sense of the verb "to learn".

But to deny that coaches of Olympic champions are born with unique gifts, is not to suggest that someone has taught them or trained them into all they know. There are other possibilities.

Many top coaches have learnt how to coach by first having learned how to learn. Learning is very different from being taught. Most significant learning is self-organised. It may happen in the presence of a teacher, trainer or therapist and it may relate to how they are thinking, feeling and acting at the time but it is not directly caused by what they do.

Thus the first step towards understanding how good teachers are made is to recognise that in part, but crucially, they make themselves. They were not born with the specific seeds of good teaching in them, any more or any less than the rest of the human race. But, by happenstance, design or perseverance they have become in Personal Construct Psychology terms, good personal scientists taking responsibility for creating their own personal knowing. Here we will use the term 'personal myth' to designate the personally relevant and viable meanings which are the personal knowing that results from personal science. The term myth is meant to carry all its positive, negative, allegorical and transcendental implications.

Carwyn James (1977), Carl Rogers (1969) and Yehudi Menuhin (1977) each appear to have been outstanding enablers of others learning. How did they achieve this? They achieved it through a tacit understanding (Polanyi, 1958) of how to conduct a learning conversation. Carl Rogers spent a significant proportion of his professional life in attempting to make his version of this tacit understanding explicit, to himself and then publicly. This effort after awareness enabled him to develop his personal science steadily throughout his life (Rogers, 1977). Carwyn James and Yehudi Menuhin seem equally to have achieved some considerable understanding of themselves and their own methods. But being severally a rugby specialist and a musician rather than professional psychologists they have used their awareness of their own development to illuminate their understanding of how to enable learning in others. They did this without going on to develop their methods into theories of learning. One has however founded a school for musicians and the other became the doyen of rugby coaches of his day.

It is suggested that the processes by which these three outstanding teachers, and indeed all other "gifted" teachers, achieve their results might usefully be designated "learning conversation".

Minimally a learning conversation enables the client to learn more effectively and more completely. At best it enables the learner to achieve self-organisation by becoming capable of sustaining such conversation with and for himself or herself. This migration of the conversation from without to within carries with it a change in effectiveness which appears as a qualitative leap. The internal conversation does not cease in the absence of the external mentor, so its effect can extend far beyond the scope of any external conversation.

The first move in the making of a good teacher was identified in their acceptance of responsibility for their own learning. Whilst most of us are forced, by default, to accept this responsibility in some areas of our learning, it is less usual for us to do so when being taught. Most outstanding performers do, however, report having done just this in the area of their achievements, for example Fred Trueman (1978) and Sigmund Freud (1937).

The second, (necessary but not sufficient) move towards the making of a good teacher is now seen as their acquiring the ability to sustain a learning conversation with and within themselves. Each of these steps probably, in turn takes them beyond ninety percent of their peers, already separating them out as "one in a hundred" before we begin to consider the quality of the products of their learning or the quality of their internal conversation. Now for the next quantum change.

Most of those who become self-organised learners continue to value the products of learning (e.g. achievements and performance) high above their increased insight into their own processes. This emphasis is perhaps best illustrated in tennis where coaching is a second best occupation for ex-champions, but many of the outstanding coaches may never have been champions. It is only those self-organised learners who remain vulnerable enough to maintain an awareness of their own development who are able to conduct sustained and effective learning conversations with others. This probably disposes of another ninety percent of our already fairly exclusive group of 'potentially good teachers' taking us into the "one in a thousand" class. Thus whilst "gifted" teachers are made they do not make themselves very often.

At this point we come to what is probably the greatest obstacle in our quest to understand how good therapists, trainers, tutors, consultants, counsellors and coaches are constructed. The problem is that they all behave differently, they all give different explanations of how they achieve their results and they all describe different developmental experiences as significantly influencing them. What is worse many of their disciples, the Rogerians, the Fred Trueman and the Freudians who appear to behave in roughly the same way as their masters, who expound their masters' theories and identify a meeting with (or reading of) the master as a crucial developmental influence on them do not begin to achieve anything like the master's results.

How are these obvious observations to be explained. Let us continue the Personal Construct Psychology paradigm. Each 'original' operates as personal scientist construing and validating their own personal views, theories or myths about their own, and then other peoples, processes of learning. They develop their own personal myths about:-

- (a) Individual capacity and talent,
 - (b) optimal conditions for learning,
 - (c) what constitutes good performance in their chosen field,
 - (d) what constitutes a proper approach to learning/teaching
- and (e) how to enable those they select for learning, to learn.

The differences between their myths in each of these five areas are vast. But the myths 'work' for the range of people, situations and purposes for which their originator developed them. What good teachers have in common is more difficult to discern. It is here suggested that what they share is a tacit recognition that the learning process must be self-constructed and that the teaching/learning process must therefore be truly conversational.

Only by freeing learners to exercise whatever weak and vulnerable capacity for personal science they possess, will these learners eventually develop a strong and healthy capability to create and validate effective personal myths of their own. Only a truly conversational process simultaneously allows the learner the real freedom to say and mean whatever he or she thinks or feels, whilst protecting, supporting and guiding them into ever more valid "personal science".

A learner's views, theories and personal myths must be the robust and thoroughly tested outcomes of their own personally evaluated experience. This experience may (indeed should) include being exposed to the best of public knowledge, but their use of this knowledge, their idiosyncratic analogies, selection, re-organisation, rejection and re-construction of it will have subtly transformed it and made it personal. Even when the resulting personal myth appears identical to the public version, the active process of self-organised learning will have made it their own.

The skilled learning conversationalist has recognised that the primary object of learning is the construction of these personal myths via an increasingly more valid, personally scientific process.

This brings us to the critical distinction between a 'gifted teacher' and a 'successful instructor'. The successful instructor is concerned with the "correctness" of the knowledge that is transmitted and received. The "gifted teacher" is concerned with the quality of the personal knowing and adequacy of the personal validation that is achieved. Good teachers may challenge and criticise the learners 'personal myths' but in the last analysis they value the ability to construct, develop and test out personally relevant and viable meanings, (constructions of experience) above the specific content of any particular meaning that is currently held.

This outline exploration into the making of a "gifted" teacher has raised some fundamental issues.

We have argued that people:-

- (a) who accept responsibility for their own learning,
 - (b) who are able to conduct a learning conversation with themselves (and are, therefore, in a state of continuing growth and development)
- and (c) whose concern for others, leads them to value that other's ability to construct

personally relevant and viable meanings of their own, above the specific content of the skills, attitudes and knowledge they happen to develop,

will inevitably come to use a conversational rather than an instructional or didactic methodology for enabling others to learn.

The paradox is that many good teachers have not made this conversational process explicit either to themselves or to others. They have a feel for it but they have not identified it as the central essence of what they do. Indeed, they often ascribe their success to the particular personal myths about their specialism, about people and about the teaching methods which they have constructed, found and/or made to work for them. These are as varied as the teachers, therapists, tutors, trainers, coaches, counsellors and consultants who espouse them. Each personal myth will work in some less or more viable way for the individual who constructed it. But it will almost inevitably restrict the range of people that the teacher is able to work with, the area and extent of personal meaning which they can tolerate in another and the capacity for growth that they believe the other capable of generating. Thus most "gifted" teachers are only gifted for certain people, in certain topic areas, for certain periods in their development; and to reverse our earlier 'one in a thousand' rhetoric it is also likely that everybody has the capacity to be a good therapist, trainer, tutor, consultant, counsellor and coach for at least one other person, on some particular topic for some small but crucial period during their development.

Thus given the conditions (a), (b) and (c) summarised above, we see that the making of a good teacher relates to the quality of the personal myths which they develop and upon which they base their practises.

In developing their own personal myths (i.e. mix of metaphor, analogy and observation and combination of prejudice, understanding and self-validating hypotheses) the good teacher does not differ from the rest of the human race. Where they differ is in recognising that this ability to generate personal myths is the process of learning. Those who believe that learning is a process of unquestioningly acquiring already established public knowledge will never make good teachers.

Personal myths are the basis of both the behaviour and the constructions of experience of the person, in the topic area referenced by the myth. Thus the quality of the practice results from the quality of the myth. But the myth is informed by the practise as it is tested, reviewed, revised and reconstructed in the light of experience. Nothing is more theoretical than good practice. The personal myth is both the embodiment of the practice and the vehicle of its production. Thus for most areas of human endeavour the 'truth' of the myth, even if this could be defined and evaluated, is less important than its power to inform and articulate the practice of its holder. Or perhaps it is more viable to suggest that the 'truth' of the personal myth is its power to inform the practise.

What has been suggested about personal myths for all human beings is applicable to that subset of the human race who classify themselves as psychologists.

THE PERSONAL MYTHS OF PSYCHOLOGISTS

Freud, ??????, Klein, ?????? and Rogers (to name but "five"!) differ considerably in their personal myths about human nature; but discussion/controversy about the merits of their alternative views has tended to hide the more important and interesting congruence in their willingness, nay their insistence, that clients construct viable myths of their own. It is in their commitment to a valid learning conversation, first with themselves and then with those clients with whom they chose to work, that their similarity appears.

The second theme of this paper is an attempt to add a little to our view of psychology as a joint enterprise by a community of humans concerned with and for other humans.

Let us take the topic of chemistry as an analogy to illuminate our concerns. What was the state of pre-chemistry prior to the emergence of the atomic theory of matter and Mendeleeff's table of elements. The alchemists and apothecaries saw naturally occurring substances such as frogs legs, lime, slugs, salt-petre and the eyes of toads as the components out of which they could construct their practises. Only when attention shifted to what came to be recognised as more fundamental and universal entities such as elements, atomic structures and valencies did the practise of chemistry begin to cohere. As chemistry moved away from the idiosyncratic myths of the magicians and alchemists towards the more meticulously validated and therefore more easily shared representations of the chemists, one man's practise began to be systematically informed and influenced by another's.

Magicians and alchemists were almost certainly thought to be born not made and the trials and tribulations of a long apprenticeship was considered to be a necessary condition for achieving the state of grace which was a pre-requisite for being allowed to practise. Ritual and rote learning played their part.

Whilst the author has no intention of seriously comparing contemporary psychology with the state of alchemy prior to the emergence of chemistry as we know it, the analogy may help us to sort out one or two ideas.

Each magician and alchemist of any note seems to have developed a system, style and domain of their own which had little logical or coherent relationship with its predecessors, nor with those that came later. The personal myths which informed their practise seem to have been culled from experience, formulated and validated in applications. Apprentices, acolytes, disciples and fellow travellers took these personal myths and treated them as gradually more authoritative dogma. They usually developed their own practises in forms which were increasingly self-validating of the master's myths.

It would be invidious within this analogy to name names whether of magicians or psychologists but the reader may experience very little difficulty in perceiving the history of psychology (until how recently?) as a record of heroic attempts to construct and validate personal myths about human nature which were self-validated by the disciples. Each heroic myth appears to have had only a slender connection with what came before and not to have informed those formulated later. There often were and are many competing myths available at anyone time. Another aspect of the analogy is that the alchemists and magicians could not always guarantee that their spells and potions would work and had what are to us quite bizarre ideas about the properties of matter and the influences upon it, to explain their failures. The intermittent working of their methods might be thought to be due to the

composition of their personal myths. These contained assumptions which do map but only very patchily onto the rather more viable chemical myths which came later.

Another more positive part of the analogy is that in pursuing their dreams the magicians and alchemists had invented many of the tools which helped to launch the new science of chemistry.

Finally with hindsight, chemical historians can identify many of the ideas which were later re-invented or re-discovered as lying dormant in the writings of the earlier workers. The problem was to discover the paradigm which allowed the chemical scientist to sort the relevant and viable from the merely plausible, elegant or misleadingly impressive.

As embryo soothsayer I would like to suggest that psychology now contains a number of ideas analogous to those which launched chemistry or which with hindsight we see could have launched chemistry as a coherent body of knowledge.

One such idea is that meaning is personally constructed and always contains in indivisible form what psychology has often separated and called perception, thought, feeling and action. George Kelly's invention of construct systems is one exposition of this idea. His idea of 'personal science' is a powerful embodiment of the humanistic psychological paradigm.

A second related idea is that the evidence of psychology comes in two forms which are differently available to participants in the quest for psychological explanation. These are 'behaviour' which is available as evidence to the external observer of the psychological phenomena; and 'experience' which is directly available only to the subject of the psychological phenomena. Psychological explanation requires its own theory of relativity in which the psychological perspective of the explainer is an essential component of the explanation.

A third idea is that "cause and effect" or "system relationships" in the sense pertaining within the paradigm of the physical sciences can never be an adequate means for explaining how one human being influences another. The construction, reconstruction, exchange and negotiation of psychological processes between human individuals requires some 'different' concept of relatedness. The process of conversation could be analysed, re-synthesised and progressively refined into such a concept. The idea of 'personal science' requires amending or supplementing into a fully 'conversational science' paradigm.

A fourth idea follows from the second. Psychological Relativity applies not only to the subjects of psychological investigation but also to the investigators. This usefully blurs the distinction between psychologists and people.

A fifth idea which in many ways transcends all the others whilst deriving most directly from numbers three and four is that the whole nature and intentionality of psychological investigation will change. Psychology will generate a participant conversational method of investigation in which the psychologist is both conductor and technical assistant. The conductor will articulate the conversation, and the technical assistants will provide special tools and procedures for facilitating those parts of the conversation which cannot proceed unaided.

These ideas are merely a personal sample selected to illustrate a general point. This is that the particular form of explanation constructed in any situation must suit the needs and personal myths of its participants. Alternative explanations will be evaluated for their power to contribute to the needs, experience, performance and growth of the participants.

The author has spent a considerable proportion of his professional life studying learning in its natural habitats. His purpose has been to invent ways and means for helping people to expand their capacity for learning. On the way he has found himself constructing personal myths about human learning which appear helpful as conceptual tools in this endeavour. What follows is an attempt to sketch out some of the major characteristics of these personal myths.

THE AUTHOR'S PERSONAL MYTHS

The construction of Personal meaning is central to the understanding of human beings and to human beings understanding themselves. Meaning always exists in context and therefore nothing has personal meaning except in its personally significant similarities and differences to other things.

The idea of bipolarity can be a useful means of expressing meaning (especially its submerged aspects). But this does not mean that a hierarchical structure of bipolar constructs is the only, or even the most, convenient and useful form in which to elicit and represent personal meaning.

The role of perception as a dynamic feedback loop in purposive activity is so central to all understanding of human activity as to always warrant particular attention (see Fig 1.). This is most easily appreciated in work with the sensorily handicapped.

Internal human processes, whilst not adequately represented by current psychological knowledge (or even by the paradigms of human processes which inform this knowledge) will be better understood if represented in our patterns of personal meaning. This will gradually enable us to learn how to self-organise our own health.

The inclusion of such representations of internal process into personal meaning require new concepts of time structure. Various cybernetic models offer ideas about how meaning might be given such dynamic forms of representation. When meaning is no longer expressed as elements aligned on bipolar constructs the repertory grid is no longer an adequate or even feasible means of representation.

New techniques are required which, whilst preserving the essential "elicitation" process by which a person reveals the forms in which they construct experience, may capture personal meaning in whatever forms the individual feels best represent it. These techniques need to be such that their representations of personal meaning can be mapped one onto another to articulate the process of conversation.

The idea that personal meaning can be operational (i.e. riding a bicycle) but properly non-verbal implies that it exists in many different forms. An effective conversational technology would embody forms for representing and exchanging personal meanings which are compatible with the forms in which it exist within us.

A PERSONAL RECONSTRUCTION OF KELLY'S THEORY

A person may, perhaps, best be viewed as a system (Allport). Each new system has properties which cannot be deduced from its parts and how they relate one to the other (Lorenz, 1977). The system properties emerge and are retrospectively 'explained' by changing the meaning attributed to each part (sub-system) and to the consequences of their dynamic interaction. The whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

The Fundamental Postulate and Inspecting Razor Blades

Let us give meaning to the system properties of a person by reference to the fundamental postulate.

'A PERSONS PROCESSES ARE PSYCHOLOGICALLY CHANELLED BY THE WAYS IN WHICH HE ANTICIPATES EVENTS'

Here the person is an inspector at the end of a razor blade production line. He samples the products, rejecting some and accepting others. When asked why he has just rejected a blade he has to look at it again before saying that it has a 'second grind fault'.

This man's job is:-

- a) to alert previous manufacturing operations if they begin to go out of control
- b) prevent items going further if they will disrupt subsequent operations, and
- c) prevent faults from getting to the customer.

(Thomas, 1962)

During a conversational 'perceptual grid' elicitation he decides to use 17 different types of fault as element. Twelve of them are named by reference to an operation in the manufacturing process feeding to the inspection bench, four by reference to their consequences for subsequent operations and one in terms of possible customer reaction.

The fundamental postulate reveals that the inspector's processes (i.e. perceptions of faults) are psychologically channelled (i.e. differentiated, elaborated and named) by the ways in which he anticipates events (i.e. anticipates the consequences for him of finding particular types of fault) (Thomas, 1965). As the grid elicitation proceeded this became clear. All his constructs were expressed in operational terms e.g. difficult to identify, frequently occur, cause friction between inspection and production departments etc.

The inspector experienced considerable difficulty when asked to concentrate on constructs that were expressed in direct sensory terms (e.g. visual, tactile etc.). Indeed it was only by referring directly to a set of physical examples of the faults that he was gradually able to 'ladder' down to the datum of sensory experience. A complete perceptual grid (Thomas, 1975) contains three levels of construct:-

- a. inferential (i.e. for personal anticipation)
 - b. interpretive (i.e. universal descriptive terms)
- and
- c. sensory (i.e. direct sensory evidence).

By separating these out, and then analysing how construing at one level related to construing at another, the inspector was enabled to become more thoroughly aware of his own perceptual processes. His inability to name the fault when challenged immediately after rejecting a sample of blades is now illuminated. He was inspecting blades, not to name the fault, but, to offer control information to the production staff. His psychological processes were channelled accordingly. Other examples which illustrate this perceptual channelling are:-

- a. managers' perceptions of two-person (man-management) events recorded on video tape
- b. students' views of mathematics examination questions
- c. a 'blenders' classification of 'raw' whiskies
- d. magistrates' perceptions of an accused person's court room behaviour.

One part of a systems analysis of such experiences of the fundamental postulate in action might be indicated by Figure 1.

A 'whole job' grid exploring how managers perceived their subordinates, revealed the structure of that part of their construct system involved in conducting an appraisal interview. Their grids were structured very differently from the items on the appraisal form. Detailed interviews began to reveal some of the mechanism by which they built a model for anticipating the behaviour of each subordinate. This mechanism might be outlined as in Figure 2.

The manager, the student, the inspector, the blender and the magistrates have all acquired some experience (experience corollary) of the tasks expected of them. But each magistrate (etc.) construes replications of events differently (construction and individuality corollaries). Exploration of the magistrate example used the Raiffa method for identifying the weightings given to individual constructs in arriving at a decision (THOMAS & HARRI-AUGSTEIN 1984).

Using 'court sentences' as elements (e.g. unconditional discharge, £20.00 fine, probation, 3 months imprisonment) each magistrate elicited a grid. When 'talked down' into a particular court case the magistrate systematically assigned weightings to each construct. The court cases were then themselves construed and categorised. Notional sentences were also passed. The weighted grids predicted the sentences for each case with embarrassingly high reliability. The categories of cases mapped one to one onto the different patterns of weightings assigned. 'Similar' court cases produced similar patterns of weightings and thus a 'consistency' to the individual sentencing behaviour. But a different cluster of 'cases' carried a different set of construct weightings and a different pattern of sentencing behaviour. Thus the meaning attributed to an 'offence' makes the apparent inconsistency of a magistrate understandable through his or her personal myth. In a similar study using mathematical examination papers (Chapman, 1975) showed that not only was the tackling of examination questions predictable on an individual basis: but the basis of prediction, (the grid and the weightings) offered a powerful diagnostic and counselling tool.

Such studies throw light on the mechanisms of what is sometimes called attention (dynamic set, the drive mechanism of anticipation) and they also begin to reveal some of the structure of the processes by which the enduring meanings of the individual are being constructed.

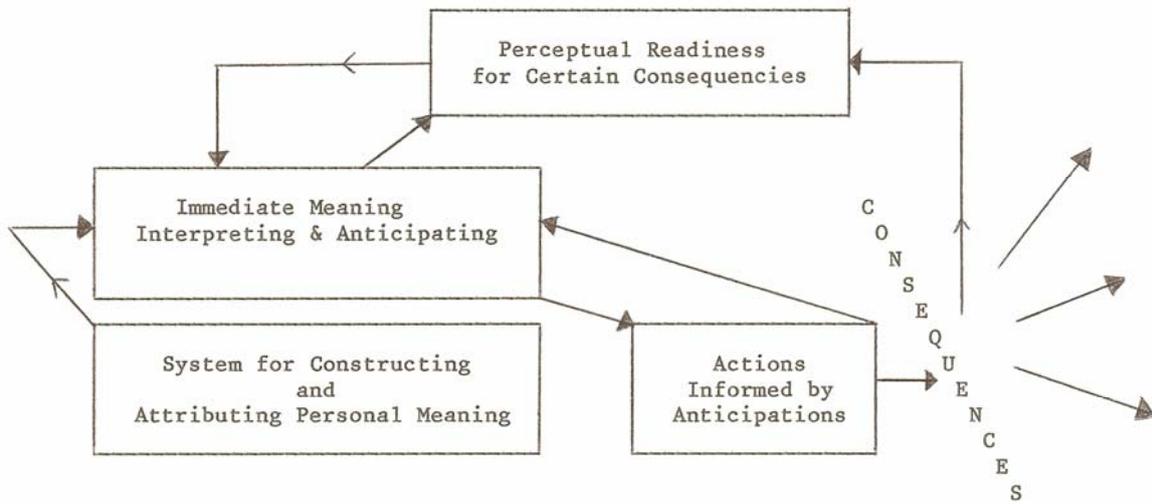


Figure 1. Purposive Activity

CONSTRUING SYSTEM

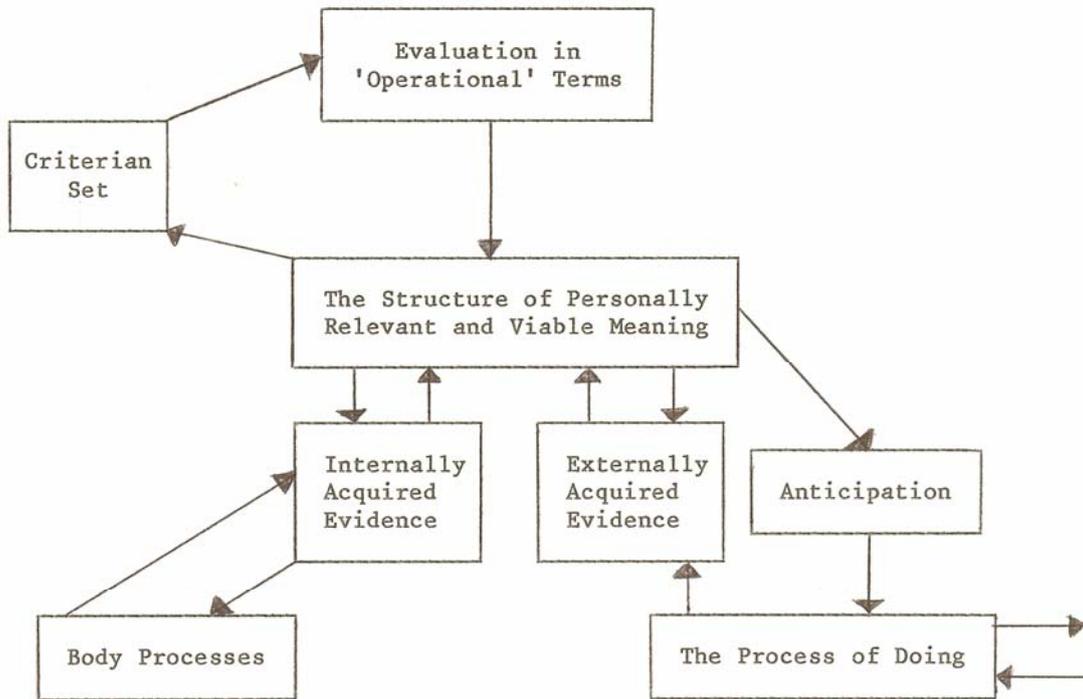


Figure 2. The Mechanism of Internal Review

This might be represented as in Figure 3.

Feelings influence, and are indeed part of, the anticipation of events. The control of heart-rate, temperature and adrenalin release as well as psychosomatic influences upon health are equally a part of the internally orientated doing process, as is the production of feelings (e.g. you give me a pain in the neck). My deeply felt personal elaborations of the fundamental postulate led me back to the gaps in my P.C.P. grid.

An Endowment Corollary

The projects of students working with the deaf and the blind, with physically handicapped and mentally handicapped people has raised a very lively debate about the influences of genetic endowment on the person as construer. Endowment influences the construction of experience by determining the starting and functional conditions of the organism.

Whilst growth from any one starting condition can develop in an infinite number of ways the starting condition still influences the growth. In the face of the unknown or doubtful evidence, optimistic assumptions are not only morally more justified, but also operationally more productive. Clearing away our own pre-emptive and 'constellatory' constructs frees us to be 'propositional'. Three points at which endowment influences construing are:

- a. Construction process itself (organisation and choice corollaries)
- b. Processes of doing (? corollaries?)
- c. Structure of Knowing (The Dichotomy, Range and Fragmentation corollaries)

There is no space within this paper to extend this discussion of 'Endowment', but there would appear to be a prima facie case for considering at least one endowment corollary.

Directionality and the Joe Bailey Exercise

In 'Behaviour as an Experiment' (Kelly, 1970) acknowledges behaviour as the test-bed of construing. Behaviourism was such a predominant theme in the psychology of his time that the corollaries, are, in reaction perhaps, deliberately lacking in reference to the outward appearance of any action. In emphasising the person as prior, and the constructing of experience as its central 'subject matter', P.C.P. by implication depreciates the usefulness of another's report of the persons' behaviour. This counter-balances the behavioural psychologists propensity to 'explain' behaviour without further recourse to the behavior. But in anticipating, the person inevitably acts, and this coupled with the related state of perceptual readiness maintains a process of doing (i.e. of action).

The Behaviour Corollary

'ANTICIPATING EVENTS PRODUCES BEHAVIOUR FOR INTERVENING (I.E. AVOIDING) CONTROLLING OR OBSERVING THEM. THE STRUCTURE OF BEHAVIOUR DEPENDS UPON THE PATTERN OF THE CONSTRUCTIONS OF EXPERIENCE OF EVENTS CONSTRUED AS RELATED'

The 'Joe Bailey' exercise is well known in industrial training. It consists in a programmed 'management' problem. A man is taking days off, and becoming unpunctual. The reader is briefly briefed and then offered four choices of action. Decision leads to additional briefing

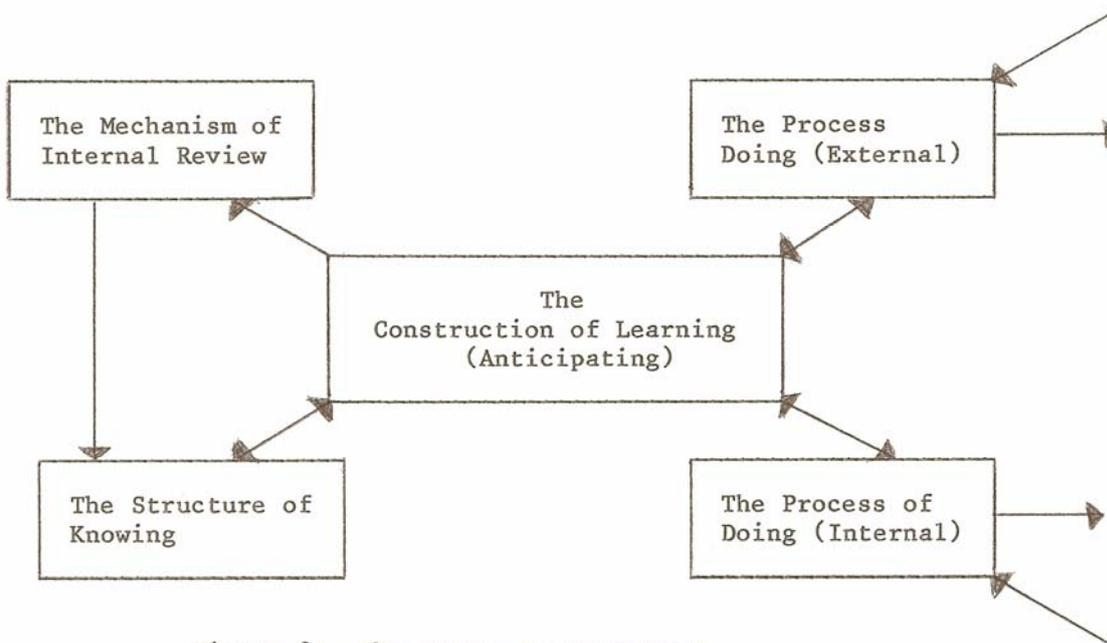


Figure 3: The person as construer

and more structured choices. Each move is recorded and the exercise proceeds until one of five end points (e.g. sacking him, sending him to personnel etc.) is reached. Norman Chell (1978) has used this exercise for some time. Recently he began to add a Repertory Grid exercise to it. He listed all the choices at all the decision points. When the participants had completed their paths through the problem, each also completed a Repertory Grid using the choices as elements and eliciting their own constructs.

The grids were FOCUSed and used to talk each individual back through their decision making behaviour. The results were highly illuminating showing clear relationships between the thoughts and feelings of the individual and the anticipatory nature of the behaviour. Records of reading behaviour have also been used (Harri-Augstein, 1979) to talk people back through the micro-structure of behaviour into a reconstruction of the experience of reading. Such studies have, for me, indicated that P.C.P. requires some formal acknowledgement of the structure of behaviour in addition to the construction of experience. Together these lead to an additional:-

Directionality Corollary

'THE PATTERN OF PERCEPTUAL SELECTIVITY INHERENT IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF EXPERIENCE OF AN EVENT GUIDES BEHAVIOUR DURING THE EVENT. THE 'CYBERNETIC' LOOP GENERATES DIRECTIONALITY IN BOTH BEHAVIOUR AND EXPERIENCE'

and

A Range and Time-Span Sub-Corollary to the Directionality Corollary

DIRECTIONALITY WILL ENCOMPASS A CERTAIN RANGE OF EVENTS AND WILL EXHIBIT CERTAIN COHERENCE OVER TIME. THIS RANGE AND TIME-SPAN ARE FUNCTIONS RELATING THE EVENTS THEMSELVES TO THE CONSTRUCTIONS OF EXPERIENCE OF THEIR REPLICATIONS'.

Awareness: Reflecting upon One's own Processes of Construing

The system 'a person' exhibits and experiences directionalities which are certainly not to be inferred directly from the sum of the parts. Freud invented the unconscious to cope with such system properties. Many users of the Repertory Grid appear to equate the constructions of experience with consciousness. Since the client offers the constructs they assume that he or she must have been aware of the construing. The elicitation of the grid is itself a constructive activity. What emerges is often new. Reflection upon its contents by the client often, indeed usually, provides new insights. It reveals the structure of an individual's systems for attributing meaning to events, i.e. the structure of knowing. But what is it that becomes conscious. It is the content of the knowing and some aspects of its structure. Our inspector learned about his own perceptual processes by being forced to systematically identify the sensory evidence from which he drew his conclusions. The perceptual activity was rehearsed in the presence of a commentary arising from his own constructions of experience. He developed an awareness of his own processes. Similarly the 'Joe Bailey' managers were conversationally encouraged into greater awareness of their own decision-making processes.

Six first-year social science students failed a 'mock' statistics examination. To enable them to reflect on their thoughts and feelings about statistics they all did conversational grids, three used computer aided conversations (Thomas, 1978) and three used a hand grid sorter. They each identified eight or ten personally significant statistical concepts as elements e.g. 'risk', 'chance', 'probability', 'standard deviation' etc. They reported that the experience had released their feelings about the subject and enabled them to begin to learn and think about it logically. Three weeks later they all passed the statistics examination. Four of them scored more than 65% and were in the top half of their year.

Awareness Corollary

'TO THE EXTENT THAT A PERSON CONSTRUES HIS OR HER OWN CONSTRUCTIONS OF EXPERIENCE, HE OR SHE ACQUIRES CONSCIOUSNESS. TO THE EXTENT THAT A PERSON CONSTRUES HIS OR HER OWN PROCESSES OF CONSTRUCTION HE OR SHE ACQUIRES MORE COMPLETE AWARENESS OF THEMSELVES AS A PERSON'.

Intentionality: The Awareness of Directionality

Within the confines of this paper examples of the practicality of P.C.P. have been restricted. Each has been elaborated only sufficiently to illustrate a point. The whiskey blender was introduced merely to exercise the imagination and no mention was made of his construct pole 'green stick'. This referred to his use of branches from a particular bush in the distillery grounds. When freshly broken these emit an odour which he uses to calibrate one dimension of his sense of smell.

A recurring problem experienced by many (if not all) people is that they often decide to do one thing and end up either not doing it, or, doing something else (Laing, 1970). The converse is also experienced. Having decided not to do something the person ends up doing it after all. Being able to express an intention is not equivalent to achieving it. The process of achieving recognised purposes involves one of two strategies: the passive or the active. Passively one becomes reconciled with the directionalities inherent in ones construction of experience, acknowledges them and thereby achieves intentionality by learning to anticipate the outcome of the directionalities over which one has no control. This is called 'acknowledging your own limitations and learning to live with them' or 'learning to make the most of yourself'. The whiskey blender is revered for his skill, which he has acquired during 40 years with the same firm. Whilst knowing about the 'green stick' and using it to maintain his judgement during blending, he is totally unable and disinclined to construe his own processes of construction. Only by so doing could he hope to pass on his skills rapidly and efficiently to another.

The nature of this passive intentionality is only revealed if or when an attempt is made to interfere with the directionality on which it is based. Active intentionality is achieved when awareness extends into the process out of which the constructions of experience arise. This enables the person to systematically review how they are constructing their experience and to intervene in the construction process. They are, thus, able (when they have learned to modulate their interventions) to control their own directionalities achieving true intentionality.

Intentionality Corollary

'A PERSON ACHIEVES INTENTIONALITY BY AWARENESS OF HIS OR HER DIRECTIONALITIES. THIS MAY REMAIN PASSIVE MERELY ANTICIPATING DIRECTIONALITIES OUTSIDE HIS OR HER CONTROL. ACTIVE INTENTIONALITY REQUIRES SUFFICIENT AWARENESS OF THE PROCESS OF CONSTRUCTION TO INTERVENE AND CONTROL THE DIRECTIONALITIES GENERATED BY IT'.

Running, Jumping and Standing Still (with acknowledgment to the Spike Milligan film)

Finally let me reveal some of my own disagreements with P.C.P.:-

I do not believe that meaning is constructed only from bi-polar constructs. Whilst logically everything can be seen to evolve from a raw basis of similarity and difference, psychologically I do not rest easy with this restriction. The Fuzzy set theory of Zadeh (1971) and the network descriptions of Pask (1975) offer other very enlightening forms with which to mould meaning.

Also, the choice corollary is wrong, or I do not fully appreciate it. People do not always operate to maximally elaborate their systems. For me there are at least three positions on the bi-polar construct 'choice - no choice'. Construing systems (people) can fall into radically different modes of operation. They can become habituated. In this state not only do their constructions of experience rigidify but their anticipations and actions, based on these constructions, ensure that they remain in an environment which offers no challenge. This leads to either static or dynamic 'ultra-stability'.

Or the system can operate optimally, but not necessarily as personal scientist.

The internal process for evaluating the construction of meaning (Figure 2) can recount its 'criterion set' from three different sources.

- a. the outside world including other people as objects (e.g. as personal scientist).
- b. the inside world (e.g. Carl Rogers' fully functioning person uses his or her own organism as the ultimate test of fitness e.g. as personal artist)
- c. other people as a community of meaning (e.g. the law of the land e.g. as personal politician).

Personality is largely a function of the mix of these referents in the personal criterion set.

Ultra-stability and optimal operating define two very different modes of functioning.

Finally the construing system may operate creatively. The 'process for doing' may link back onto the construction process itself providing a positive feedback which generates the phasic system of provisionality and decisiveness, of loosening and tightenings, of looking out and looking in, which seems to indicate the functioning of creativity. Any adequate conversational theory/technology of psychology should be capable of generating movement between these modes of operation.

THE POWER, ROBUSTNESS AND PRACTICALITY OF P.C.P.

The robustness of a theory lies in its capacity to travel. In preparing to write this paper I listed, in ten minutes and without references, 72 completely different types of element recently used by Members of the Centre. In looking at the list I now immediately remember more. Examples include works of art, classroom events, computer programs, statistical concepts, drug addicts, the results of a creativity test, activities of a shoe shop assistant and faults occurring in a breakfast cereal. Clients have varied from eight year olds to geriatrics, catering apprentices to managing directors and photographers to building technologists. Given sufficient ingenuity to identify suitable and personally meaningful items of experience, conversational uses of P.C.P. can enable a wide range of people to learn, change and develop in significant ways. This paper reports one use of these techniques.

Its robustness of P.C.P. as a meta-theory will be demonstrated if a wide variety of existing thought and practise is re-orientated and re-energised by it. It is my firm belief that P.C.P. has the capacity to do this.

The practicality of a theory is measured by the impact made by its practitioners on affairs. This is already wide spread in its original clinical field, but in addition I can report that the conversational technology generated by the P.C.P. approach to industrial and commercial training and to education is, and can be, outstandingly successful (e.g. Harri-Augstein and Thomas 1979, Pope 1978, Harri-Augstein 1979).

The gaps in my corollaries grid can serve to illustrate the power of the theory. Being by its own definition reflexive, and advocating, as it does, an emphasis on personal knowing and individual constructions of experience, places the theory in an unique position. Being reflexive it can construct the mechanisms for its own revision. Emphasising the importance of individuality it should encourage each exponent to use it as nutrient to their own creative processes. It can allow an infinite variety of special developments which if they survive, may break away or feed back into the mainstream. It is not only a theory about how people can generate theories about people: it is also a theory about how such theories can change and develop. Without distracting, too much, I hope, from the main theme of this paper, an attempt has been made to present it in a form that reveals our experience of conversational technology and the variety of tools that can be recruited to facilitating the conversational process.

EXPANDING THE PARADIGM

Another role of psychology will, for some time, be that of natural historian. The natural history function will be to collect, describe and taxonomically classify examples of human function as they contribute to the enhancement of the human condition as seen from different meta-perspectives. The conversational technology will develop to enhance the quality of human intercourse; intra-personally, inter-personally, in small groups, between small groups and between what we now call institutions.

In various studies of "human learning in its natural habitats" the areas of investigation explored by the author have been concerned with a rather different mix of human endeavours and conditions than the mainly clinical issues which formed the main thrust of Kelly's work, (although his early academic studies, his wartime activities, his comments on teaching post-

graduates and his own practical skills show him to have had and used a wide base of experience out of which to formulate his psychology).

Work in schools, colleges, universities, prisons, industrial and commercial training departments, and a wide variety of 'learning on the job' projects, (in which I have been as concerned to enable learning as I have been to study it), gradually pushed me towards a paradigm of psychological work which is very similar to Kelly's. This paradigm is implicit in the first half of the chapter. Where it differs from P.C.P. is that :-

- (a) being no longer oppressed by an all pervasive behaviourism it does not discount the systematic evidence provided by records of behaviour.
- (b) it acknowledges biological and physical endowments without believing that any existing public myth about talent, personality, intelligence etc., gets anywhere near categorising endowment in forms which are useful for enabling change, growth and learning.
- (c) ideas about the exchange, sharing and negotiation of personal meanings and ideas about social self-validation (and therefore about ultra-stable systems of public meaning) offer opportunities for the paradigm to be extended more solidly into the field of social psychology and sociology.

Kelly made a major breakthrough in his invention of the repertory grid: but a full paradigm of the psychological enterprise calls for a fully developed symbiotic methodology.

Another way of presenting this view of the psychology of the future is as follows:

(a) There will develop a series of complimentary, supplementary, competing and/or mutually exclusive paradigms of the psychological enterprise. These will constitute a pattern of meta-psychologies which are content-free and in fact embody alternative knowings and expectations (i.e. hopes, fears, plans, plots and fantasies) about the past, present and future of the human race in its various contexts. The comparative study of such meta-psychologies will illuminate and thus transform philosophy and religion. Perhaps a less psycho-centric way of expressing this would be to say that philosophy and religion already perform this function and psychology will be illuminated and informed by them. Either way there will be a conversation.

(b) Each meta-psychology will have the potential to differentially facilitate and inhibit certain future developments of the human condition. They will therefore constitute a more powerful political and ethical reality than we have previously had to face.

(c) Each meta-psychology will generate its own resources of ideas and methods including a library of personal myths. Each new participant will use these as nutrient to their own development. Literature and all other art forms will form a part of this library.

Making explicit what has in fact always been the nature and purpose of the psychological enterprise will illuminate many other areas of man's attempt to understand the world around her and him. It will also offer a means by which the human race or self-selected parts of it can create and pursue alternative futures.

The reader may now discern a second reason d'etre for the title of this paper. The imminent threat of the development of some powerful psychological practises not only implies the existence of some rather effective theories but it also imposes the need for a meta-conversation which will preserve the freedom of choice of both psychologists and all their potential clients.

Readers of this book will recognise that George Kelly is one major source of such ideas. But the most encouraging aspect of the prospects for psychology is that similar ideas have appeared and are appearing in many unexpected and expected places.

The final theme of this paper is therefore an attempt by the author to place himself within one meta-psychology and to reflect upon his own personal myths as developed in thirty years work on human learning in its natural habitats. George Kelly's personal myth already stands powerfully and centrally within this meta-psychological position. As Kelly's myth is more coherent, better presented and more widely known than that of the author it has been taken as a template against which the authors myths can be defined by their differences.

ON CONSTRUING PERSONAL CONSTRUCT PSYCHOLOGY

In the belief that the psychologist should be his own prime laboratory, I have sought signposts from P.C.P. which have positions within my own personal myths. Using the fundamental postulate and the corollaries as elements for a grid, the following constructs emerged:-

C1.	Relates to how people differ	v	Treats peoples' similarities as constructions of personal meaning
C2.	Is static and concerned with the structure of the system of personal meaning	v	Introduces the concept of time and relates to the process of constructing meaning
C3.	Clarifies relationships between meanings	v	Defines the nature of meaning
C4.	Requires bi-polarity	v	Bi-polarity unnecessary for the main myth to be viable
C5.	Only logical	v	Psycho-logical.
C6.	Concerned with only one person	v	Admits of more than one person.
C7.	Implies only one mode for constructing meaning	v	Requires a meta-level of meaning construction.
C8.	Acceptable to me	v	Questionable.
C9.	Has added significantly to my understanding of psychology.	v	Already contained in psychology

Having elicited these constructs I completed the grid, FOCUS-ed it (Thomas, 1975 & 1978) using two-way cluster analysis and REFLECT-ed upon the pattern that emerged. The results worried me for a variety of reasons, some of which will emerge. Having worried, I sat back and began to seriously consider why, for me, Kelly's myth has been so useful and why I find P.C.P. so practical.

Cogniscent of established repertory grid techniques, I have, nevertheless, along with other fellow seekers (A. Radley 1977, M. Mair 1976, and Harri-Augstein 1978) reinvented, selected, discarded, used, distorted and developed 'tools' to serve my own particular purposes. Some years ago, reflecting on this activity of psychological tool-making I listed some 63 'tools' of the psychologists' trade. These varied from client-centred therapy to the Skinner box, from the Tachistoscope to Interpretation of Dreams and from Ravens Matrices to the Eye movement camera. The preferred poles of the clusters of constructs that emerged from this 'tools grid' serve as criteria for my evaluation of the 'theoretical coherence' of "good practise". Comparing the constructs from my postulate and corollary grid against this 'criterion set' immediately led back to my view of the theory. Much of what I value was missing. What else should I have included as elements to make the sample more representative of P.C.P., as I understand it? Repertory grid hostility, Personal Scientist, Reflexivity, Behaviour as experiment, the sample rapidly expanded and the balance of ideas completely changed. I merged my two sets of constructs and attempted to complete a new (complimentality) grid (Thomas 1979) by assigning every element in this new sample of 'items of my experience in P.C.P.' to each construct. After FOCUS-ing this new grid I was able to identify some of what had been missing from the postulate and corollaries. By 'SPACE'ing the FOCUS-ed grid I was also able to identify gaps which were still not yet filled by any of my elements.

During the elicitation process I found that some elements represented more than one 'item' and I therefore ended up, for example, with Repertory Grid A, Repertory Grid B, Repertory Grid C and Repertory Grid D. For reasons of space and clarity I have not included any evidence from these grids. Their purpose was served in my reflections.

In examining my view of the implications of P.C.P. for social psychology (Thomas, 1979) I have already elaborated suggestions for four 'missing corollaries'. These relate to 'endowment', 'self-awareness', 'social awareness' and 'complimentality'. Preparation for this present paper has again raised my doubts about the propriety of such an exercise. The 'acceptable to me' v 'questionable' and the 'has added to my understanding' v 'already contained...' constructs helped to clarify this issue. P.C.P. embodies a paradigm for psychological activity. 'Bi-polarity necessary' v 'Bi-polarity unnecessary' indicates a part of the theory which seems too specific to stand at the meta-theoretical level. 'Endowment' indicates a question about human nature with which any meta-theoretic position must come to terms. Thus my simple 'complimentality' grid had already helped to clarify one issue. For me, there are two types of gap in P.C.P. One is 'missing corollaries' which would expand the paradigm to more nearly fit that within which I feel comfortable. The other gap concerns those 'personally useful and specific elaborations' which I have found necessary to include in those personal myths which enable me to teach and study human learning.

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