

The Semantic Ill-formedness of Cause and Effect
by

Dennis K. Chong and Jennifer K. Smith Chong ©

Fifteen years ago, to wit, in 1991 we had very serious structural concerns about the Meta Model. We cite them now, whilst retaining our continuing respect for Richard Bandler and John Grinder. What is said here, are considerations in and of themselves. We do not mean or intend attacks of a personal nature - an unsane activity and if you arrive at the conclusion that this is what we are doing in this essay, then for you - *Honi soit qui mal y pense*..

Our first concern with the with the Meta Model was that it is configured in Causality. Alfred Korzybski called it the Aristotelian system¹ (A). Alfred Korzybski indexed in his work *Science and Sanity* its critical structural flaw:

We “feel,” and try to “think,” about “cause and effect” as *contiguous* in “time.” But “contiguous in time” involves the impossible “infinitesimal” of some unit of “time.” But, since we have seen that there is no such thing we must accept that the interval between “cause” and “effect” is finite. This structural fact changes the whole situation. If the interval between “cause” and “effect” is finite, then always something might happen between, no matter how small the interval may be. The “same cause” would not produce the “same effect.” The expected result would not follow. This means only that in this world, to be sure of some expected effect requires that there must be nothing in the environment which can interfere with the process of passing from conditions labelled “cause” to the condition labelled “effect.” In this world, with the structure which it has, we can never suppose that a “cause,” as we know it is *alone* sufficient to produce the supposed “effect.” When we consider the ever-changing environment, the number of possibilities increases enormously. If it were possible to take account the *whole* of the environment, the *probability* that some event would be repeated, in all details, thus exhibiting the assumed two-valued relation of “cause” and “effect” which we took for granted in the old days, would practically be nil.

Alfred Korzybski: *Science and Sanity* The International Non-Aristotelian Library Publishing Company 1958 page 216

More significantly, in his work, Korzybski then went on to show that thinking by the Aristotelian System was the mother condition for many other variants of semantic ill-formedness. He then proposed his non-Aristotelian system (\bar{A}) as the answer to the semantic ill-formedness that is intrinsic in Causality. He utterly rejected Cause and Effect and when he came to register his publishing company, he named it the International Non-Aristotelian Library (our bold and underline) Publishing Company.

The interesting thing is that in 1777, David Hume also saw the same flaw:

But when one particular species of event has always, in all instances, been conjoined with another, we make no longer any scruple of foretelling one upon the appearance of the other, and of employing that reasoning, which can alone assure us of any matter of fact or existence. We then call the object Cause; the other, Effect. We suppose that there is some connexion [sic] between them; some power in the one, by which it infallibly produces the other, and operates with the greatest certainly and strongest necessity.

It appears, then, that this idea of a necessary connexion among events arises from a number of similar instances which occur of the constant conjunction of these events; nor can that idea ever be suggested by any one of these instances, surveyed in all positions. But there is nothing in a number of instances, different from every single instance, which is supposed to be exactly similar; except only that after a repetition of similar instances, the mind is carried by habit, upon the appearance of one event, to expect its usual attendant, and to believe that it will exist. This connexion, therefore, which we *feel* in the mind, this customary transition of the imagination from one object to its usual attendant, is the sentiment or impression from which

we form the idea of power or necessary connexion. Nothing further is the case.

David Hume: *Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals* Clarendon Press 1979 page 74 - 75.

Then, in the most uncompromising of ways, Bandler and Grinder indexed one of the semantic ill-formed consequences of thinking by Cause and Effect:

We have generalized the notion of semantic ill-formedness to include sentences such as:

My husband makes me mad.

The therapist can identify this sentence as having the form:

Some person causes some person to have some emotion.

When the first person, the one doing the causing, is different from the person experiencing the anger, the sentence is said to be semantically ill-formed and unacceptable. The semantic ill-formedness of sentences of this type arises because, it, literally, is not possible for one human being to create an emotion in another human being - thus, we reject sentences of this form (our underline). Sentences of this type, in fact, identify situations in which one person does some act and a second person *responds* by feeling a certain way. The point here is that, although the two events occur one after another, there is no necessary connection between the act of one person and the response of the other. Therefore, sentences of this type identify a model in which the client assigns responsibility for his emotion; rather, the emotion is a response generated from the model in which the client takes no responsibility for experiences which he *could* control.

Richard Bandler & John Grinder: *The Structure of Magic* Science and Behaviour Books Inc. 1975 pages 51 - 52.

It is significant to note that in the above quote, Bandler and Grinder asserted, “**we reject sentences of this form.**” In asserting this they are in fact saying that, like Korzybski, they reject the form of thinking that generates sentences of this type. And the generator of this kind of sentences is thinking by Cause and Effect.

It is critical to grasp that this elegant turn of phrase “semantically ill-formedness” is a genteel and posh way of saying that this activity is illogical and insane². The structure of thinking by the Aristotelian system is that it offers people the way to blame, fault and guilt others. Sometime in the late seventies, we first heard the term the “Blame Frame” from the original creators and developers of NLP. This phrase is synonymous with thinking by the Aristotelian system or Cause and Effect, a.k.a. as Causality, Causal Modeling and Implied Causative, the Question of WHY.

In that Korzybski rejected the Aristotelian system, it was inevitable that Bandler and Grinder rejected the question of WHY:

It was at the Mission Street groups that we first began acquiring our information gathering tools that were later to become the meta model patterns. The foundations of the information gathering tools began with the how, who, and what questions from the Gestalt framework, deleting that unspoken question, why.

We used to get yelled at and sometime bopped on the head for saying why. In a very therapeutic way of course.

Terrence L. McClendon: *The Wild Days NLP 1972 -1981* Meta Publications 1989 page 40.

Here, surely is the ultimate analogical metaphor for the work *Don't Ask WHY?! Would you really want to have Bandler or Grinder yell at you and bop you on the head for asking “why”?* And yet, every day in this world everyone keeps barking out this question. And much worse people cannot stop doing so. They cannot because “why” and the entire Aristotelian language system has a tremendous and subtle power over how our mind and being:

We do not realise what tremendous power the structure of an habitual language has. It is not an exaggeration to say that it enslaves us through the mechanism of *s.r.* and that the structure which a language exhibits, is *automatically projected* upon the world around us. This semantic power is indeed so unbelievable that I do not know anyone, even among well-trained scientists, who, after having admitted some argument as correct, does not the next minute deny or disregard (usually unconsciously) practically every word he had admitted, being carried away again by the structural implications of the old language and his *s.r.*

Alfred Korzybski: *Science and Sanity* The International Non-Aristotelian Library Publishing Company 6th Reprint

1980 pages 90 - 91.

Imprisoned in the neuro-semantic ill-formedness or insanity of the Aristotelian system we are just like an acute paranoid schizoid who is certain and sure that his thinking is sound, sane, coherent and well grounded. In spite of *Science and Sanity*, the insight by Bandler and Grinder, and the work *Don't Ask WHY?!* people fail to be aware of the insanity in which they are in. We are insane and yet we do not know that we are so. For this, people just barely cling to the rapport that they have with each another. Their fate is to remain in trepidation and fear about when they might lose it.

We are all mesa to The Question of WHY and our thinking and being is from the Aristotelian system. Its operations in us are unconscious. Therefore, any contrary position about it will fail to register:

1. Reviewers savaged *Science and Sanity*.

Most 'philosophers' who reviewed this book made particularly shocking performances. Average intelligent readers can understand this book, as they usually have some contact with life. It is not so with those who indulge in mere verbalism. I can give here only classical example of some 'philosophical' performances. A reviewer in the Journal of Philosophy, February 1, 1934 writes:

'Except for his stimulating discussion of the mathematical infinite (p. 206) and his hints on the nature of theory (p. 235), he contributes nothing to the clarification of meanings by definite analyses of special problems. Indeed, he only adds to the confusion when he declares that hypotheses contrary to the fact are meaningless (e.g., p. 168); if his views are correct, science would come to an end. His theory of meaning, like his theory of social causation, is very naive, to say the least.'

I suggest that the reader verify whether on page 168 there is such a statement, or even a hint at such a notion, which I could not possibly have. Besides, I do not give any theories or 'meaning' or of 'social causation'!

Alfred Korzybski: *Science and Sanity* The International Non-Aristotelian Library Publishing Co. 1980 Fourth Edition, *Sixth printing* page xxviii

This reviewer that Korzybski notes in the above quote, completely missed what he was saying. Let us be clear on this - the language system of Cause and Effect is not the instrument for rapport nor for gathering information. It is best at crucifying people. Attorneys at law use it in court for this end. Parents are tasked to control those homicidal feelings that are evinced when their little darlings keep positing "why?" and "why?" to them. "Why" is not a gathering information question.

2. *Don't Ask WHY?!* has also been reviewed in the same somewhat unkind of way. To use a Korzybskian turn of phrase, it has been subjected to 'shocking performances.' The saddest part of it all is that reviewers keep missing what the work is saying. After all, to assert to people, "Don't ask why," is to ask them to stop using blame in their lives." How is it that when people review the book that they miss this completely. Let us quote again:

We do not realise what tremendous power the structure of an habitual language has. It is not an exaggeration to say that it enslaves us through the mechanism of *s.r.* and that the structure which a language exhibits, is *automatically projected* upon the world around us. This semantic power is indeed so unbelievable that I do not know anyone, even among well-trained scientists, who, after having admitted some argument as correct, does not the next minute deny or disregard (usually unconsciously) practically every word he had admitted, being carried away again by the structural implications of the old language and his *s.r.*

Alfred Korzybski: *Science and Sanity* The International Non-Aristotelian Library Publishing Company 6th Reprint 1980 pages 90 - 91.

One has to wonder if it is possible to be a well-formed and coherent psychotherapist if one uses the language system of Cause and Effect by which to think, speak, relate and above all to organize one's reality? People who think by WHY or Cause and Effect will inevitably loose rapport with other people. The saddest witness to this truth is that the very people who researched into the structure for human rapport and proposed its technology to the world, were to lose it between themselves. Geared in their thinking and moored in their being to Cause and Effect they blew it between themselves. (If you interested to learn more the ill-formed consequences inherent to thinking by the Question of WHY,

refer to the series of papers on this subject that are posted at the web site www.neuro-semanticprogramming.com & www.neurosemantics.com.)

In this warped reality of Cause and Effect, Virginia Satir was to rise in a conference. This distinguished and fine soul, expressed her definitive opinion of what she thought about the question “why.” She to the astonishment of some and to the acclaim of many declared that, “WHY is a mind f . . . king word.” And in the field of the therapies that, for many, about nailed the word in its coffin.

Then came this observation by Cassidy:

The causality principle requires that every effect be preceded by a unique cause. This idea had served for over a century as a basic assumption of practically every form of rational research. The French mathematician Laplace is credited with perhaps the simplest definition of causality as applied to Newtonian mechanics: if the position and momentum of a particle are accurate known at a given moment, then, its motion is fully determined by the mechanical equations for all future time.

The uncertainty principle, Heisenberg asserted, denies this: “in the strict formulation of the causal law - if we know the present, we can calculate the future - it is not the conclusion that is wrong but the premise.: The initial values of the momentum and position cannot be measured simultaneously with absolute precision. As such one can calculate only a range of possibilities for the position and momentum of the particle at any future time. The causal connection between the present and the future is lost (our underline), and the laws and predictions of quantum mechanics become probabilistic, statistical, in nature.

Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle was profound and far-reaching inn nearly every respect.

David C. Cassidy: *Heisenberg, Uncertainty and the Quantum Revolution* Scientific American May 1992 pages 110-111.

By this, the reader trapped in the Aristotelian system, Cause and Effect, the Blame Frame and the Question of WHY needs to recognize now that High Physics is saying, the “causal connection between the present and the future” is lost. For this, Cause and Effect is not tenable. To do so entails all forms of semantic ill-formedness.

It was therefore, critical to extract the Meta Model out of A, the Blame Frame or WHY.

The second problem with the Meta Model is that it went along with a neurological fallacy that it is possible to delete or filter out incoming information. In doing so, the Meta Model was biased in concordance with this. It is a matter of sensory based evidence that you cannot do such a thing. If you do not believe us, then try and do it right now. See if you can do it. Look at this piece of paper and this sentence. Now as you look at it, DELETE IT! Filter it out from your seeing it. Do it NOW!

You can’t . . . unless you go through the rigmarole of someone guiding you into a trance and suggesting a negative hallucination!

You cannot “NOT” see it. The only way that you do “NOT” see this piece of paper and this sentence is if you look at something else. Whatever you are looking at, you cannot delete or filter it out either unless you look at something else and so forth. As Qui Gon Jin told Anakin Skywalker, “Your focus is your reality.” Reality is not a function of a person “NOT” seeing, “NOT” hearing and “NOT” feel what he is looking at, listening to and what he is in touch with. Reality is a by-product of what he is scanning, tuned to and feeling, i.e. what is focus is at a given moment in time..

This embedded inaccuracy in the Meta Model, led to the formulation of certain linguistic formats. These linguistic formats had concordant structural tilts that bought into this neurological fallacy. As a result the formats in question were flawed.

The Meta Model₁₉₇₅ was an incredible and a wondrous creation of its day. However, it was limited in the scan of its considerations. In the form that it had, it was far short of the augmentations and expansions that were finally added to it and which found their final complete form in the WWF-metalanguage₁₉₉₃ (WWF-ML) a.k.a. Gathering Information Module (GIM). The WWF-metalanguage stands for the Watzlawick-Weakland-Fisch-metalanguage. It is so named to honour these researches who initiated the concept of the metalanguage and who laid out the arguments for such an entity. To this day we are not aware of any rebuttals to discount it.

The Meta Model did not recognize that how we are is a function of how we use our blueprints of life. We use these blueprints to understand ourselves, others, things, situations and the world we are in. These blueprints are our semantic paradigms. The evidence is that whatever are the set of semantic paradigms that a person has, they are not in a state of dispersion. They are in some coherent whole, the Hierarchy of Paradigms (HOPs). This concept was first

proposed in the work *Don't Ask WHY?!*

There are three categories of semantic paradigms that comprise the HOPs:

- a. the General Paradigms - so called because they are shared generally by all members of a societal group.

**Race &
Racial History**

**Language &
Language History**

**Religion &
Religious History**

**Culture &
Cultural History**

**Politics &
Political History**

**Morality &
Moral History**

**Ethics &
Ethics History**

**Legal System &
Legal History**

**Social System &
Social History**

Dennis K. Chong & Jennifer K. Smith Chong: *The Knife Without Pain* C-Jade Publications 1993

page 97

- b. the Specific Paradigms - so called as they are specific and unique to a given individual

- c. the Meta Paradigm because it is outside of the frame the General and Specific Paradigms. We concur with Alfred Korzybski that it is either the Aristotelian or the non-Aristotelian system³.

By this definition, the Meta Paradigm controls the operation of all other paradigms. Thus, if you consider the paradigm of Religion, we know that the Catholic faith is maneuvered by and through the Blame Frame. Every Catholic who sins has to take the blame for killing his God!

There are two meta paradigms. It is either WHY or No WHY, the Blame Frame or the No-Y-ian Frame (see below). It follows that to shift from:

- i. WHY → No WHY
- ii. Blame Frame → No-Y-ian Frame
- iii. Aristotelian system → the non-Aristotelian system

would be the ultimate paradigm shift. Today₂₀₀₀, the technology for do this shift is here.

In that the Meta Model did not grasp the place of the paradigms it formally failed to realize the subsets within the paradigms that act as powerful ontological drivers. Gathering Information is very much about these drivers. The scan of possible epistemological drivers, therefore, extend beyond Beliefs, EMPs (Enriched Meta Programs), Virtual Questions, Virtual Themes and Criteria. Like every thing in life it is a little bit more complicated. Today, the field of Neuro-Semantic Programming is exploring these considerations.

The Meta Model did not include the critical domain of Informal Logic. For a long time, Logicians had known that the formats of Formal Logic was unusable in daily life. And, in fact, people did not use it. In fact, people intuitively created their own system of logic. This system is universal. Logicians began to explore what this was. They have worked out its linguistic formats and they are embodied in the field of Informal Logic. It is critical for a psychotherapist to know what they are since this is what people are using. To be in rapport, you have to know Informal Logic to be in sync with the other person. Some of the items in Informal Logic are known to you. They include *ad hominem*, slippery slope and red herring.

When Alfred Korzybski worked out the insanity of the Aristotelian system or the Question of WHY, he set out to find the language system of the non-Aristotelian system. The Meta Model did not include this Korzybskian non-Aristotelian language system. Alfred Korzybski however did not discover what this Non-Aristotelian or no-WHY language system was. We were to do so and we have name it the No-Y-ian language. This language system is a powerful information gatherer.

Richard Bandler and John Grinder proposed the formats of Calibration as a gathering information tool. However, at a formal level Bandler and Grinder never incorporated it into the Meta Model. In our view it is a critical component of the total gathering information manifold. Calibration is a gathering information tool of the body language. When it is used within the scope of the Quadrant Search of Neuro-Semantic Programming, calibration assumes a critical and crucial status. Therefore, we have decided to list it has one of the components of the WWF-metalanguage.

Finally, we were to include our innate ability to read the body language. The formal term for this is adumbration. Our adumbrative skills are blunted by our reliance on the spoken word. However, with fine and good training a clinician

can retrieve his finesse in reading the body language. From an evolutionary point, our the first language was the body language. Our ancestors had to be competent readers of the body language if they were not to be at risk.

The WWF-metalanguage (WWF-ML) is also known as the GIM, i.e. the Gathering Information Module. It is a manifold that includes the following:

- a. the Modified Meta Model
- b. the No-Y-ian Model
- c. Informal Logic
- d. Calibration
- e. Adumbration.

Endnotes:

1. Aristotelian system was so named by Alfred Korzybski because Aristotle was the philosopher who delineated the structural formats of Causality.

2. illogical and insane is one possibility of human illogicality. The other is illogical and humorous and hence of mirth and laughter. When it is insane it is the condition for pain and suffering. When we look back, what was more insane than the argumentation of the domino theory that spun off the American war in Vietnam and all the pain and suffering.

3. the Aristotelian or the non-Aristotelian system has these synonyms Causality or Relativity, Blame Frame or the no-WHY Frame a.k.a. the No-Y-ian Frame.

Dennis K. Chong & Jennifer K. Smith Chong: *2nd Order Chance and The Language about Language*, unpublished paper, page 3 - 9.