

Critical Equivalence (CEq) - An Upgraded View

by

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One definition of Critical Equivalence is that it is the final variable that, because of its unique submodalities, determines the distinctive responses and behaviour in a human being for a given semantic domain of consideration. Let us, by example show what this means. Let us suppose that a given man falls for a woman that we shall designate as G. In doing so, in his context, he has discounted A, B, C, D, E, and F. Now the pre-eminent question is:

“How did he know to fall for G?”

This is where Critical Equivalence, CEq, comes in.

The field of Neuro-Linguistic Programming has shown that above decision by the man to fall for G depends on the CEq that G possesses. However, this same CEq, as a variable, already exists in the man. Therefore, what is happening is that in his interrelationship he is unconsciously looking for it. This is to say that he has a virtual CEq that acts as a powerful ontological operator that compels him, unconsciously, to scan and sort for it in his world. Finding it in G, he inevitably falls for her, just as inevitably as the nail biter will bite his nails.

This CEq acts as a sorting device. As such, it will have to be deemed a component of his EMPs (his body of Enriched Meta Programs, ref: *Power and Elegance in Communication* People Paradigms and Paradoxes). So, as stated above, once he finds his CEq-in-actuality, he falls for G. His way of “falling for G” is a unique piece of behaviour. Given that this is so, we can now see that a CEq acts as an ontological determinant of human behaviour as all EMPs do.

Given that human beings are capable of a vast and indefinite number of physical behaviours, we are left, at first sight, to conclude that there must be a matching number of CEQS, and therefore, by extensions, of EMPs. Conceptually this is an unmanageable state of affairs. This, fortunately, is not so. Human behaviours can be aggregated and categorized into classes, but within each class are a limited number of unique patterns. In this way, this means we are looking at a comprehensible and apprehendable number of CEqs.

In our explorations of CEqs, we recently encountered something that we believe would be

of interest to the general professional community. We shall explicate by the transcript of the consultation between the client and us.

We begin with part of the information that she wrote to us in her Data Sheet at the first consultation with us.

PERSONAL INFORMATION AND BACKGROUND: *single mother, widowed 1981 (December) - remarried 1984 - divorced 1989*

HISTORY of the PROBLEM: *1) abandonment + ignored kid all my life + still am (by family) (2) being last on the list (3) being backstabbed + lied to by family*

If the problem can be solved, WHAT DO YOU WANT?: *not to cry as much, handle situation + family + friends more effectively, be happy*

In this transcript, "Q" stands for the authors' question they pose to the client and "A" stands for the client's answer she gave in reply to the question.

TRANSCRIPT

Q: How old are you

A: 40

Q: What is the name of your ex-husband?

A: John

Q: How long were you married to John?

A: Five years

Q: What happened for you to decide to divorce John?

A: Neither of us loved the other. We got married

COMMENTARY

This is for us a standard question to begin the interview. It is a Time question and serves to give us some idea of the maturity of the client.

From the Data Sheet, we know she was divorced. This question provides us with a verbal handle if we were to refer to her ex-husband.

A marriage can be a very trying climb up a very steep mountain. This Time question seeks to find out many things including the good will that each party held for the other; their tenacity, their ability to set differences aside and so forth.

This question presupposes that she initiated the divorce. If it is so, we are interested in knowing the conditions for her to take such a decision.

when I was still sick.

Q: How specifically were you sick?

Always as the question using the patient's own words and not, "In what way were you ill or not well."

A: My (first) husband had died. He was there to help me.

Q: John?

This question verifies that it was John to whom she is referring to.

A: Yes. We are good friends.

It is good to know that, although her marriage with John has ended, she and he are still good friends. This is important if there are children by the marriage.

Q: What was the name of your first husband?

A: Barry

Q: How did he die?

A: A motor vehicular accident.

Q: How long were you married to Barry?

A: from 1978 to 1981 (three years).

Q: Your child, Adam, is by you and John?

A: Yes.

Q: How is John as a father to Adam?

This question is to find out if there are any problems in that area that might relate to the client's problem state.

A: He is an excellent father, the best!

Q: What does John do?

We have encountered good fathers who, for one condition or another, have worked for years.

A: He retired a few years ago. Now he owns a bar.

Q: What did he do before?

A: He was a company owner.

Q: Does he live near you?

It would be a shame for such a good friend and excellent father to be living far away. So we ask this question to check.

A: He lives in Mississauga. We live in Oakville.

Q: Where do your parents live?

A: Ancaster

Q: Do you have a good relationship with your mother?

A: No!

Q: You do not have a good relationship with your mother because . . . ?

A: I have a little sister that she cares more about.

Q: But not you?

A: I am never considered.

Q: What is your evidence to claim such a thing?

A: I was cut out of having Christmas with my family. My mother said, "If you bring your friend Billy, then your sister Nancy, will not come, and I would rather have your sister and her son than Billy.

Q: What is your relationship with Billy?

A: She is my girlfriend. She and her son live with me.

Q: Does Billy know Nancy?

A: Oh yeah. My whole family knows her.

Q: What is the problem Nancy has with Billy?

He lives in the adjacent municipality

This is three municipalities from her.

A surprising answer to us. Daughters usually have good relations with their mothers.

The form of this question is to retrieve a deletion by modus ponens.

Jealousy rears it's little head.

We ask this question to be sure.

Her answer was in linguistics an ill-formed one. Therefore, it was insufficient. Therefore, a challenge is applied and it is one derived from Informal Logic.

This piece of information is quite something. Here she provides the condition for it that, in turn, raises, in substructure, a tantalizing set of psychodynamics.

We know what you might be thinking, but even we had to restrain ourselves. Never bring the cloven hoof of your biases on any psychotherapeutic interaction.

A: They had a problem last year and they never resolved it.

Q: And specifically what was the problem?

A: Billy phoned Nancy and pointed out the family's cruelty to me.

Everything changed after that.

Q: How else are they cruel to you?

A: Not considering my feelings and what I have to say.

Q: can you be more specific please?

A: About Christmas, I cried and cried and cried.

You don't leave people alone at Christmas!

But it did not have any effect on them. I was told that I was welcome with my son and my ex-husband. But Billy was not to come. I told them **you do not leave people alone at Christmas.**

The next night I fell apart. I did not want to go to the family Christmas.

Q: So, you did not go to the family Christmas.

Q: No. If I did Billy would have been **alone on Christmas.**

Q: However, in that you did not go, from their point of view they could say that you rejected

Clearly from the above, there is some problem between Nancy and Billy. This question seeks information about it.

This is some potentially explosive allegations. One would have to enquire if it is true that EVERYONE in her family was cruel to her - as alleged by Billy.

Quite so, this would not have been a surprise.

This question expands the search for other examples of "cruelty."

One can have tears of rage, of frustration and of anger

Here is a possible CEq - **people ought not to be alone on Christmas.** This could be the ontological sort for which she would turn her back on her family.

We are now satisfied that *this is the CEq.*

Not "wanting to" does not mean that she did not. This question is applied to confirm what she did.

Here the CEq again implicitly rears its head.

them and that you did not consider their feelings at all.

A: You could say that.

Q: In that case then who are we to convict?

A: No one.

Q: Specifically how was your father cruel to you?

A: My father was never cruel to me.

Q: Specifically how was your brother Tommy cruel to you.CEq

A: Never.

Q: Has Bobby ever been cruel to you?

A: Never

Q: Has your brother Timmy ever been cruel to you.

A: Never.

Q: Specifically how was Nancy cruel to you?

A: Nancy gave Adam a book of MacDonald Certificates last Christmas.

Q: Their value?

A: \$5.00. they were five pages of \$1.00 each page. The others got baseball hats with their favourite team shirts.

Q: What did Nancy give Adam this year?

A: A cassette tape of music. Since the incident

A most unwilling concession.

This question is applied to challenge the position that she has taken. She had been verbally and analogically, blaming her family during the consultation, for violating her CEq. This is a CEq that appertained to an entire subset of implicit socio-cultural-Christian values, tenets and canons.

Thank God, logic was still extant.

Now we decide to examine the validity of Billy's allegation that implied that every member of her family was cruel to her.

Aha! Here we have the first crack.

She replies with an edge to the tone of her voice.

She does not like the questions.

More cracks.

Even more cracks.

Nancy and Billy, Tommy and Bobby do not visit me.

Q: Before the incident, did they come

A: Yes. We are a pit stop for my mother and father when they go to visit Nancy in Toronto. My sister holds grudges. She has a powerful influence over the family. Billy has no family.

Q: Do you have an OK relationship with your sister?

A: Yes.

Q: Then, what do you want?

A: For them to come about and acknowledge what I wanted to accomplish: to care from my heart that **no one be left alone on Christmas** and nobody recognized that.

Here she skips to a different logical order of consideration. We think that she does this because she does not like the line of questioning and she decides to change it.

We go along. Always follow the track the client elects to go on.

Here we decide to do a skip. It occurred to us that even if Nancy gave Adam a \$5.00 book of MacDonalds Certificates, did it logically mean that she and Nancy do not have a good relationship with each other. So this question is put to her?

Her reply takes the wind right out of our sails. With controlled exasperation we therefore ask her this question.

Here then was the critical CEq - *ad majoram gloriam CEq cum laude*. And this would be categorized as the definitive “act of cruelty.”

What the above, therefore, suggests is that we will need to think in an expanded way about the CEqs. This case shows that the concept of CEq can clearly go beyond the definition that is

usually appended to it.

Here it has taken the form of a philosophical position that in turn manifests itself as a Diltsian **criterion** of behaviour. The CEq can also be seen as an imprinted ontological **sort**, and **EMP** that in a given socio-religious context was critical. It was so critical for her that it determined her condition of total and absolute inflexibility notwithstanding the costs to herself, her son and her family. In such a condition, you are also looking at the condition of self-importance, a condition defined by Richard Bandler as the worst human disease from which one can suffer. In this we do agree!

Clearly such an EMP does not have any submodalities that an NLP'er can amend. As a Diltsian criterion of behaviour embedded in a miasma of implicit blame, we conclude that the problem state will only amend to the therapeutic manoeuvre of the GENERAL ORIENTATION. This is an algorithm that we invented, just as the FIVE MINUTE PHOBIA CURE is an algorithm that was invented. This was applied to her, and with it, she dropped her stance of self-importance and aggrieved self righteousness. With this new sense of things she recognized that she had a lot of repair work to do with her family. She also recognized that she would have to be patient and to bide her time and wait for the moment to do those things that might hopefully reconcile her with her family.

This case example also shows that in applying the metalanguage of the Gathering Information Module (ref: *Power and Elegance in Communication*, and *Change*) the track of information gathering has spared us the maelstrom of those considerations that she indexed in the Data Sheet, i.e., *abandonment, ignored as a kid and still am, last on the list, being backstabbed and lied to*. They turned out to be surface structure issues. This is merely an affirmation in NLP, never mind the content. Go for the structure. It is the substructure ontological process that is at issue.

References:

Paul Watzlawick, John Weakland & Richard Fisch: *Change* WW Norton & Co., Inc. 1994

Richard Bandler & Will McDonald: *An Insider's Guide to Submodalities* Meta Publications 1988

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