

An Approach to Psychotherapy²⁰⁰⁹, Part I

by

Dennis K. Chong and Jennifer K. Smith Chong

In this paper, the male gender will apply to male and female.

The nominal pronoun will refer to the first author.

The plural pronoun will apply to either.

The field of Psychotherapy is predicated to secure 2nd Order Change.

What is 2nd Order Change¹?

As an idea it was first postulated in 1974 in the work *CHANGE*:

To summarize what has been said so far: Group Theory gives us a framework for thinking about the kind of change that can occur within a system that always stays invariant; the Theory of Logical Types is not concerned with what goes on inside a class, i.e., between its members, but gives us a frame for considering the relationship between member and class and the peculiar metamorphosis which is in the nature of the shifts from one logical level to the next higher. If we accept this basic distinction between the two theories, it follows that there are two different types of change: one that occurs within a given system which itself remains unchanged, and one whose occurrence changes the system itself.⁷ To exemplify this distinction in more behavioural terms: a person having a nightmare can do many things *in* his dream – run, hide, fight, scream, jump off a cliff, etc. – but no change from any of these behaviours to another would terminate the nightmare. *We shall henceforth refer to this kind of change as first order change.* The one way out of a dream involves a change from dreaming to waking. Waking, obviously, is no longer a part of the dream, but a change to an altogether different state. *This kind of change will from now on be referred to as second-order change.* (The equivalence of this distinction with Ashby's cybernetic definition of the two kinds of change, quoted earlier, is evident.) Second order change is *change of change* – the very phenomenon whose existence Aristotle denied so categorically.

Paul Watzlawick, John Weakland & Richard Fisch²: *CHANGE Principles of Problem Formation and Problem Resolution* W. W. Norton & Co. 1974 page 10 - 11

¹2nd Order Change:

I was recently informed that this concept of 2nd Order Change is passé in Psychotherapy today. I was quite surprised to hear this. I have since talked to my colleagues about this. They are just as surprised as I am. For various reasons. I did not deem it would be a fitting thing to ask the Mental Research Institute if they have reversed their position on 2nd Order Change which as a concept came from their researchers.

² **Paul Watzlawick, John Weakland & Richard Fisch** are the resident research scholars of the Mental Research Institute in Palo Alto, California. We understand that John Weakland is now passed on.

What this quote is saying is that any change within the structures of system is 1st Order Change. Thus you can do all manner of internal alterations to a house. These changes are 1st Order Change.

However, if you were to pull your home down and turned the lot into a car park, such a change would be 2nd Order Change. It would be so because you have converted the building that was your house into another system, namely that of a car park. So a smoker who wishes to stop then replaces the behaviour by reducing the amount he smokes is involved in 1st order change only. When he stops, he has achieved 2nd Order Change.

I am 72 years. Since I graduated and assumed the functions of a physician, I have been in the healing business first as a medical doctor and then as a counselor and psychotherapist and eventually as a hypnotherapist as well. All these changes are 1st Order Changes. If I had changed and gone into the business of producing films that would be 2nd Order Change.

For every holiday I go to, it is invariably about a search for the best restaurant that will get me the best bang for the buck. In turn, my wife is invariably taking me to every museum, castle, palace and ruin that she can find for us to go to. If she and I went on a holiday, scuba diving, parasailing, fishing, hiking, trekking, mountain climbing, hunting – that would be 2nd Order Change.

Clearly, the invariantcy of our ontology is a function of the constant pattern of our thinking according to axiom:

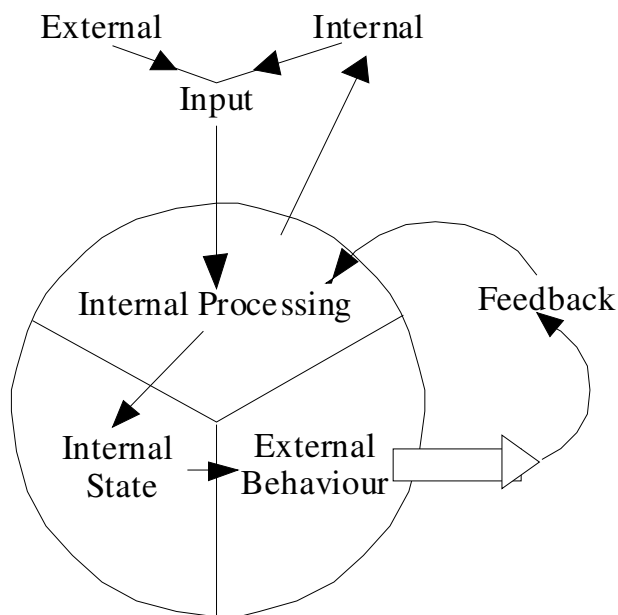
As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.

To bring about 2nd Order Change we need to understand how a person thinks.

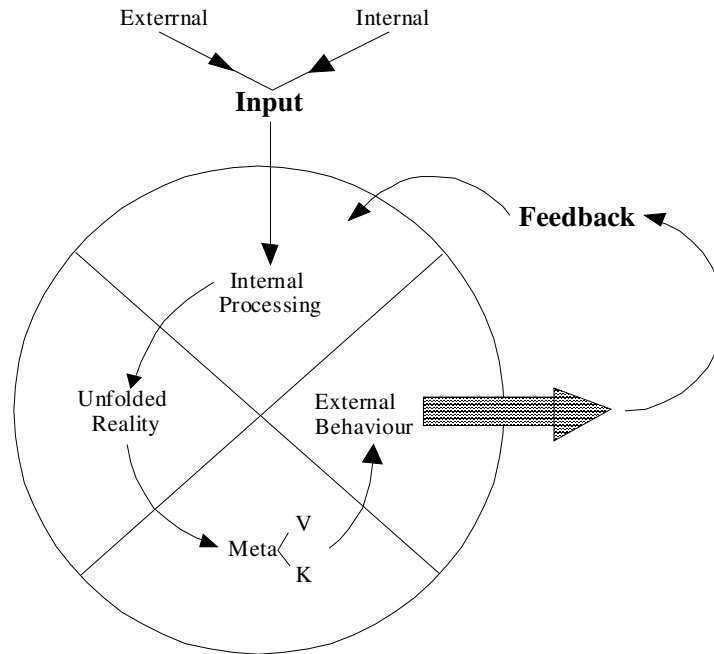
The question is:

How do we think?

In 1975/1976, the field of Neuro-Linguistic Programming, NLP, proposed that the operation known as metamentation could be described in this way:



Then, in 1993, the field of Neuro-Semantic Programming, NSP, proposed this description:



What constitutes internal processing?

This subject matter was delineated in the work, *Philosophy of As If*, by Hans Vaihinger. In this work he postulated that it was the sensory sequence complex that was the basis of human sentient steps³, to wit thinking. Below are some examples of the simplest examples of such sensory sequence complexes:

Whenever I see (vision) you, I feel (kinaesthetics) so good.
 Your voice (audition) is like music (kinaesthetics) to my heart.
 Are your feelings (kinaesthetic) clear (vision) on this matter?

Respectively they represent:

V → K shift
 A → K shift
 K → V shift

Clearly, there is an indefinite number of such sequences and some of them can be very complex.

NLP was to show that by the manouevre of calibration one could track how a person is undertaking these shifts and by extension determine how he is thinking. NLP was to name a given sensory sequence complex a strategy.

There is a statement that states:

We create our own reality.

³ the sensory sequence complex that was the basis of human sentient steps became the study known in NLP as strategies. If you become a student of this area, you will learn how complex such strategies can be.

At this point, we can say that it has something to do with our strategies.

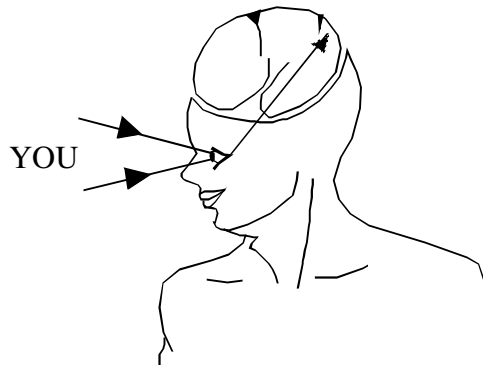
Then there came the postulates of the *Santiago Theory* by Umberto Maturana and Francisco Varella of the Department of Neuro-Sciences of the University of Chile. They put forward the view that in the beginning of our existence there was on one hand, **NOTHING**, and on the other, the structures⁴ that were in us. From these structures in us, our reality unfolded. As we have similar structures, our unfolded reality is similar. Hence our worlds are similar. Each of us has **a** world but not **THE** world.

In our view this **NOTHING** can only be the **NOTHING** as defined by Heinz Pagels for the **NOTHING** that is to be found in the condition of Absolute Symmetry⁵ just before the Hubble Big Bang:

The nothingness “before” the creation of the universe is the most complete void that we can imagine - no space, time or matter existed. It is a world without place, without duration or eternity, without number - it is what the mathematicians call “the empty set.” Yet this unthinkable void converts itself into the plenum of existence - a necessary consequence of physical laws. Where are the laws written into that void? What “tells” the void that it is pregnant with a possible universe? It would seem that even the void is subjected to law, a logic that exists prior to space and time.

Heinz R. Pagels: Perfect Symmetry THE SEARCH FOR THE BEGINNING OF TIME Simon and Schuster 1985 page 347.

If the unfolded reality were from within us, it would serve to answer an interesting anomaly. Prior to the Santiago Theory, the given was that reality existed outside of us. If this were so then, the photons of light from you would enter the pupil of my eye. It would then impinge on my retina. A chemical reaction occurs that in the retinal pigments that results an electrical excitation. This electrical impulse is then propagated along the optic nerve to the visual cortex at the back of my brain.



If this is so, then where do I see you? Do I see you in my head? Or do I see you out there?

⁴ structures:

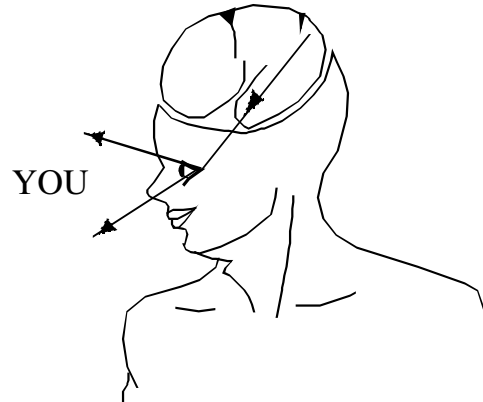
In their work, Maturana and Varella never identified what these structures were. However, in two works, *Don't Ask WHY?!* and *Power and Elegance in Communication*, PEOPLE, PARADIGMS and PARADOXES we were to note what they are.

⁵ absolute symmetry:

In Physics, absolute symmetry is defined as **NOTHING** as indexed in the Pagels definition.

While logic confirms that I see you in my head, yet, I know that you ARE out there. If this is so, we will have to postulate a mechanism by which the brain inverts the process and projects you out there.

However, if we accept the Santiago Theory, you unfold out of the structures in me, you will therefore be there for me to see, hear, feel and smell.



It is now with you and my world and everything in front of me, that a very interesting thing happens next. We believe that to understand what we are intimating here is critical to a Psychotherapist in his professional work. This we shall consider in our next paper.

References:

Dennis K. Chong & Jennifer K. Chong: *Don't Ask WHY?!*, C-Jade Publications Inc., 1991

Dennis K. Chong & Jennifer K. Chong: *Power and Elegance in Communication*, PEOPLE, PARADIGMS and PARADOXES, C-Jade Publications Inc., 1993

Heinz R. Pagels: *Perfect Symmetry THE SEARCH FOR THE BEGINNING OF TIME* Simon and Schuster 1985

Humberto R. Maturana & Francisco J. Varela: *The Tree of Knowledge* The Biological Roots of Human Understanding, Shambhala, 1987

Paul Watzlawick, John Weakland & Richard Fisch⁶: *CHANGE Principles of Problem Formation and Problem Resolution* W. W. Norton & Co. 1974

⁶ **Paul Watzlawick, John Weakland & Richard Fisch** are the resident research scholars of the Mental Research Institute in Palo Alto, California. We understand that John Weakland is now passed on.