

## **WHERE IS THE MAGIC IN COGNITIVE THERAPY? (a philo/psychological investigation)**

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*Effective therapy often seems magical.*<sup>1</sup>

*Therapeutic Realities:  
Collaboration, Oppression and Relational Flow*

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### **What is the relationship between cognitive therapy and common sense?**

Is cognitive therapy an effort to analyze common sense and to show how and when commonsensical thinking can go astray and lead to emotional disorders? Or is cognitive therapy an effort to make use of common sense in dealing with those emotional disorders? Or is cognitive therapy an effort to do both of those and more?

Beck's seminal work on cognitive therapy<sup>2</sup> begins its very first chapter called "Common Sense and Beyond" with a quotation from the distinguished American philosopher Alfred North Whitehead:  
*Science is rooted in what I have just called the whole apparatus of common sense thought. That is the datum from which it starts, and to which it must recur ... You may polish up common sense, you may contradict it in detail, you may surprise it. But ultimately your whole task is to satisfy it.*<sup>3</sup>

There is, of course, a colossal irony here. For one of Whitehead's great intellectual contributions (albeit a very early one) was *Principia Mathematica* (written in collaboration with Sir Bertrand Russell, also a

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<sup>1</sup> Gergen, K.J. (2006). *Therapeutic realities: Collaboration, oppression and relational flow*. Chagrin Falls, OH: Taos Institute Publications.

<sup>2</sup> Beck, A.T. (1979). *Cognitive therapy and the emotional disorders*. New York: Penguin Press, p.6.

<sup>3</sup> Alfred North Whitehead was President of Section A of the British Association for the Advancement of Science. In September, 1916 Whitehead addressed Section A -- Mathematical and Physical Sciences at the Association meeting in Newcastle-on-Tyne. His talk was entitled "The Organization of Thought." It was printed in *Science*, September 22, 1916: Vol. 44, no. 1134, pp. 409-419.

philosopher). *Principia* was a monumental effort to show that all of mathematics could be reduced to logic (in particular, to mathematical logic, provided that mathematical logic included the supposed by Russell and Whitehead unassailable concept of a set: Russell and Whitehead's assumption being that nothing could be more *intuitively* obvious than the notion of a collection of things or a group, which is what they and most everyone else meant by a set).

Yet starting with Frege through Gödel and beyond, this commonsensical notion of a set appeared to introduce paradoxes that rendered implausible Russell and Whitehead and dozens of other mathematical logicians' reductionistic projects.

### **What if anything does common sense have to do with science?**

Whitehead's observations seem commonsensically sound yet serious efforts to deconstruct and analyze science and scientific method (a project which consumed the minds of many philosophers in the first half of the 20th century) yield distinctly uncommonsensical (and unacceptable) results. This came as a surprise to some, but by no means to all, for the historical and mathematical roots of science, complex as they may be, are arguably as much in magic <sup>4</sup> (somewhat broadly interpreted) as they are in common sense. Pythagoras seemed to have gained genuine insight by exploring magical numerological connections. And when Newton wasn't downstairs "wowing" the Royal Academy he apparently was upstairs exploring ancient alchemic relationships. And even today, if common sense alone could do it, what need of the most interesting esoteric elements that make up modern science from quanta to quarks to string theory?

The first half of the 20th century was marked by many philosophers serving as the self-appointed handmaidens of science, attempting to articulate a logical and empiricistic model of science that would be rigorous and unassailable. Logical positivism was its name. Its fame was worldwide; Vienna was its home; and -- while he himself denied it adamantly -- the early writings of Wittgenstein were its inspiration. But that project (especially here in the U.S.) came crumbling down rather forcefully to the ground by the 1950s with the appearance of W.V.O. Quine's "Two Dogmas

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<sup>4</sup> See for example: R. Styers (2004). *Making magic: Religion, magic, and science*. U.S.: Oxford University Press, or, pertaining to the medical sciences, L. Thorndike (1941). *A history of magic and experimental science*. New York: Columbia University Press.

of Empiricism” and “meta-ironically” with Wittgenstein’s posthumous publication *Philosophical Investigations*.

### **Quine’s American Revolution**

Quine, at once a first rate logician, a philosopher of science and as well, situated at Harvard, fully in the tradition of American psychological pragmatism (from William James to C.I. Lewis), summed up almost a half-century of positivistic self-criticism in his revolutionary essay. What he showed with remarkable eloquence was that logical empiricism which purported to be in some version or another the model for all of science (including mathematics), was itself a methodology which rested firmly yet fatuously on two dogmas.

The first, the so-called (dogma of the) distinction between analytical propositions and so-called synthetic propositions, went back at least to Kant. The distinction claimed that there were basically two kinds of scientific propositions that could be articulated. One kind, the analytical, was definitional in character (in many cases mathematical) and was true (or false) by virtue of the language and definitions employed (Euclidean geometry was the best example). The other, the synthetic, was true or false by virtue of its relationship to empirically verifiable conditions (direct observation is the paradigm here). These two radically different kinds of propositions, the analytic and synthetic, constituted what most people accepted as the terrain of science, if not the broader terrain of knowledge. What Quine showed was that the commonsensical notion that these two kinds of propositions were clear and distinct (from each other) was not at all clear and distinct.

The second and related dogma of empiricism, the dogma of reductionism, was a critique of the commonsensical belief that complex propositions -- be they analytic or synthetic -- could be reduced to the smallest elements of which they consisted and that this process made visible the significance of the more complex proposition.

Finally, Quine in the last sections of his essay lays down guidelines for the creation of a science (or a conception of science) free of dogmas. His student Thomas Kuhn,<sup>5</sup> more a sociologist than a philosopher, and many,

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<sup>5</sup> Kuhn, T.S. (1970). *The structure of scientific revolutions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

many others advanced this conception. Quine and Kuhn's work shaped a new philosophical foundation of philosophy of science, though whether they have anything to do with or impact at all on science as practiced is difficult to say. Yet beginning in the 60s in *both* the Anglo-American tradition and the continental-existential tradition there has been a persistent reconsideration of what science is, of what common sense is and of whether these two have anything to do with each other. Some have considered these explorations a component of an intellectual movement known as "postmodernism." Others have taken great pains to distinguish their research from that appellation. Yet what is most interesting to me is the extent to which contemporary science and contemporary philosophers of science and others move along parallel tracks while seemingly oblivious to each other.

Most relevant to this paper, the evolution, practice, and influence of cognitive therapy grows abundantly while philosophers of psychology seriously question and advance the concept of cognition itself. (It is as if Lewis and Clark insisted that there be two different trails because they did not walk in each other's precise footsteps.)

### **Turn, turn, turn**

The cognitive turn, like the linguistic turn, like the postmodern turn, are obviously interrelated. How is not the least bit clear to many, and probably excessively clear to some.

To me, all seem a reaction to the arrogant and radical "deductiveness" of a great deal of 19th and early 20th century thought, be it positivistic or idealistic or Marxist -- they are all modernist. Many if not most reactions come from those quite familiar with the approaches they are unraveling. So with Quine and Kuhn and many of those who pursued their work; so, of course, with Wittgenstein who was in fact in his *Philosophical Investigations* deconstructing his own earlier work in the *Tractatus*; and so with the therapeutic cognitivists who had grown up under the influence of Freudian analytical theory, behavioral theory, and neuropsychological theories. (So with me as an orthodox Marxist-turned-postmodern Marxist.)

Indeed, Beck's somewhat *defensive* beginning (pardon the therapeutics) over-connecting, in my opinion, science and common sense reveals his

concern to reassure the world that a return to cognition as both a subject and a mode of study is not to be seen as any kind of rejection of science.

From a broader perspective of the “turns of the century” such defensiveness was (and remains), of course, unnecessary. For not only was consciousness in one form or another, from radical existentialism to Quine and Gödel (who was, after all, a self-identified Platonist), coming back into fashion, but theoreticians as well as practitioners in all these fields were beginning to violate the constraining and narrow-minded prohibitions of late 19th and early 20th century positivistic thought.

These successful revolutions (or turns, if you like) in physics, mathematics, psychiatry, philosophy (particularly philosophy of science), linguistics, etc. essentially occurred (as I have said) simultaneously without very much of an awareness of each other and resulted eventually in overstatements to the detriment of each of the particular revolutions. By the way, the intellectual revolutions of this period (which have been vastly more successful than the much more publicized and deadly on-the-ground revolutions of the same period) have yet to be synthesized, or in the minds of some, to be correctly characterized or labeled.

It is not within the scope of this paper to do so (or even want to), but the critique being offered of cognitive therapy is that it has, in general, gone way too far in an effort to preserve a scientific character that science no longer has. And so while it is a most significant advance in psychotherapeutics (as well as psychotherapeutic theory), it has done so at the expense of taking the magic out of science and thereby for their purposes out of the examination of consciousness and, therefore (and this concerns me most), out of therapy where “magic is what makes it work.” Some have gone to other extremes and characterize consciousness in such a way as to make it incomprehensible (or, at least, barely recognizable as consciousness). The failing and irony of the cognitive therapy movement is its *excessive* comprehensibility, particularly in light of the revolutionary world, the ever turning anti-positivist world into which it was born.

This formulation might well seem to many like philosophical claptrap, so abstract as to be of no value to anyone. So let me put it another way, less precise, but more to the point. Cognitive behavioral therapy is overly decidable (in Gödel’s sense of the word). It is thereby insufficiently magical

(in my sense of the word) and finally, cognitive behavioral therapy is insufficiently political in the broadest sense of the word. It is *unrelentingly* apolitical.

And this is a serious flaw. For not only is all science magical and virtuously undecidable,<sup>6</sup> all science is political. And the three are related. For it is a proper combination of magic (properly understood) and politics (properly understood) and undecidability (properly understood) that relates science, and indeed all thought, to the world and thereby, to the lives of people.

### **Politics properly understood**

I have spent a lifetime writing about and, more importantly performing “politics properly understood.” It is, first and foremost, an *activity*; a collective, humanistic, creative building of new things -- large and small, *mental* and *physical*. Science should not be performed in the service of partisan politics; nor should it be carried out in the name of ideologically driven politics. It must “serve the people.” While I have worked hard for almost four decades to create projects which do just that, I have never been able to put into words this humanistic ideal. Perhaps the closest I have come are in my psychological plays (mainly comedies) written for and performed at several meetings of the APA. Others have expressed the humanism of psychology better than I -- none better in my view than Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in the following statement.

*There are certain technical words in the vocabulary of every academic discipline which tend to become stereotypes and clichés. Psychologists have a word which is probably used more frequently than any other word in modern psychology. It is the word “maladjusted.” This word is the ringing cry of the new child psychology. Now in a sense all of us must live the well-adjusted life in order to avoid neurotic and schizophrenic personalities. But there are some things in our social system to which I am proud to be maladjusted and to which I suggest that you too ought to be maladjusted. I never intend to adjust myself to the viciousness of mob-rule. I never intend to adjust myself to the evils of segregation and the crippling effects of discrimination. I never intend to adjust myself to the tragic inequalities of an economic system which take necessities from the many to give luxuries to*

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<sup>6</sup> F. Newman (2003). Undecidable emotions (What is social therapy? And how is it revolutionary?). *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*, 16 (3), 215-232.

*the few. I never intend to become adjusted to the madness of militarism and the self-defeating method of physical violence. I call upon you to be maladjusted. The challenge to you is to be maladjusted -- as maladjusted as the prophet Amos, who in the midst of the injustices of his day, could cry out in words that echo across the centuries, "Let judgment run down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream;" as maladjusted as Lincoln, who had the vision to see that this nation could not survive half slave and half free; as maladjusted as Jefferson, who in the midst of an age amazingly adjusted to slavery could cry out, in words lifted to cosmic proportions, "All men are created equal, and are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." As maladjusted as Jesus who dared to dream a dream of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of men. The world is in desperate need of such maladjustment. (Dr. Martin Luther King, April 25, 1957 at the Conference on Christian Faith and Human Relations in Nashville, TN.)*

What Dr. King is saying with his usual extraordinary eloquence is that psychology must never become so scientific as to abandon its humanism. I could not agree more. Moreover, if scientific is properly (contemporaneously) understood, it need not.

### **Adding Wittgenstein to Quine**

Though it is a decade-and-a-half since it appeared on the bookshelves of the world, John R. Searle's *The Rediscovery of the Mind*<sup>7</sup> still amazes and delightfully confuses those of us, like me, who began a philosophical career in the dying moments of logical positivism.

My first philosophical trick was to point a finger at my imaginary debate opponent while not quite screaming, "That's a category mistake you've made," and then, laughing ever so quietly under my breath. This admonition came, of course, from Gilbert Ryle.<sup>8</sup> His famous, though as it turned out faddish, book of the 1950s *The Concept of Mind* certainly did not envision a rediscovery of mind four decades later.

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<sup>7</sup> Searle, J.R. (1992). *The rediscovery of the mind*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

<sup>8</sup> Ryle, G. (1949). *The concept of mind*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Ryle's work, a British combination of A.J. Ayerian-style logical positivism in its death knell and the later Wittgenstein in its birth moment, was designed to celebrate the human intellectual capacity to finally get rid of mind. Mind itself was a category mistake according to my reading of Ryle, or at a minimum it was a result of centuries of category mistakes. It was ultimately indistinguishable from Hegel's Absolute and Heidegger's Nothingness. It was *unverifiable*; invoking the positivist cross to the devil of meaninglessness.

But even as Ryle and his friends at Cambridge and Oxford were playing with this new idea, Quine at Cambridge, USA, was pragmatizing the entire issue and showing in some way that the concept of science (or at least its foundations) suffered from as much metaphysicality as the most boring existentialist on the Left Bank of the Seine.

Forty years later, which philosophically speaking is a drop in the historical bucket, John Searle, knowing a good deal of all of this tradition and even something of neuropsychology, authors *The Rediscovery of the Mind*.<sup>9</sup>

Searle, known for his contributions to philosophy of mind and consciousness, rejects dualism, seems, to me, more comfortable with paradoxicality, and considers language (and the ontological commitments of our discourse) carefully -- although not with Quine's logicity and pragmatism (Searle, as I recall, a student of J.L. Austin, is more an ordinary language realist). Searle locates the mind-body problem in the obsolete vocabulary and false assumptions that philosophers and psychologists accept and with which they perpetuate dualism: "We've inherited this vocabulary that makes it look as if *mental* and *physical* name different realms.... I'm fighting against that. The way I solve [the mind-body problem] is to get rid of the traditional categories."<sup>10</sup> Forget about Descartes' categories of *res existence* and *res cogitance*, that is, the extended reality of the material and the thinking reality of the mental."<sup>11</sup> Searle's own view, which he terms *biological naturalism*, asserts that "the brain is the only

<sup>9</sup> More recent publications of Searle's include (2005), *Mind: A brief introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press and (2006), *Freedom and neurobiology: Reflections on free will, language and political power*. New York: Columbia University Press.

<sup>10</sup> Rorty's dismissal of the concept of truth on the grounds that he is no longer interested in it may sound like Searle's dismissal of mind-body, but they are quite different. For Searle is accepting the magicity of science, while Rorty is simply defending the failure of pragmatism to understand truth.

<sup>11</sup> Searle, J.R. (1999). *Philosophy and the habits of critical thinking*. Conversation with John R. Searle by Harry R. Kreisler. <http://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/people/Searle/searle-con2.html>



thing in there, and the brain causes consciousness” (Searle, 1992, p. 248). What is most critical here is that in Searle’s conception of causation (at least psychological causation) there is no dualistic cause-effect divide; consciousness is not an effect separate from the processes producing it.

Holding to dualism, no matter how sublimated, frequently forces philosophers and cognitive scientists alike to posit ontological units that violate common sense (such as it is) and ordinary experience (ontological subjectivity): units such as mental rules and patterns, unconscious mental phenomena, and some kind of mental content to mental processes are conjured up (magically and/or pseudo-scientifically) in order to “make intelligible” the relationship between the dualisms -- mind-body, cognition-behavior, and so on. (In psychotherapeutics, witness the DSM-IV.)<sup>12</sup> It is an error, Searle says (seemingly in a partial rejection of Hume), to assume that if a patterned or meaningful relationship can be said to exist between entities or events, then the process producing that relationship must be equally patterned or meaningful. If a person thinks of B when seeing A, which resembles B, we should not (but too many do) assume there is either any content or a particular form to the mental process that results in relating A and B. We are not following any mental rules when we think of B; there is no extra mental logic needed to account for the phenomenon in question.

In sum, Searle’s point is that there is no mind-body problem. Indeed, there is no mind-body distinction. So we should stop talking as if there is one, and move on to the best we have at the moment -- neuropsychology. The mind is rediscovered in this interesting relationship between the brain and conscious thought, and consciousness, like mind, has (to vary the use of Ryle’s extraordinary metaphor) “no ghosts in its machinery.” The brain produces thoughts which are transmitted to others via behavior, most especially linguistic behavior which stimulates other brains to produce other thoughts and so on. No mystery. A little magic, but no mystery.

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<sup>12</sup> Newman, F. and Gergen, K., (1999). “Diagnosis: The Human Cost of the Rage to Order” in Holzman, L. (ed.), *Performing Psychology: a postmodern culture of the mind*. New York and London: Routledge.

## Donald Davidson to the rescue

Another of Quine's students, perhaps his most brilliant (in the name of full disclosure, he was my mentor and tennis partner at Stanford University in the early 1960s) takes it upon himself to rehabilitate some of the critical conceptions that, for example, Rorty and Searle are justifiably if not rigorously abandoning. In particular, Donald Davidson seeks to reintroduce into the ontology of philosophical thought some notion of truth (a weak one), some conception of cause (a strong one), and an idea of deducibility which goes back at least to Hempel (a logical positivist) and perhaps to Plato and Aristotle (Greeks).

Davidson's conservatism is formidable if not, to me, ultimately convincing.

## The making of a conservative

After his work on decision theory (done early in his career) Davidson published little for many years, focusing his attention on brilliant teaching. When he returned to publishing in 1963 with his seminal essay, "Actions, Reasons and Causes," his mission appeared to be to salvage from the critical writings of the many anti-positivists, pro-late Wittgensteinian critical authors of the period those key concepts we, the people, would be *lost without*. Indeed, his real mission, it seems to me, was to salvage philosophy itself. Wittgenstein, on his deathbed, had left it on its deathbed.

Davidson's brilliant analyses of various features of mental activities (intentional acts, desires, willful acts, etc.) contained as they are in separate and discreet essays written over an extended period make it difficult to see his overall perspective. But it is there. And for me, it became more apparent in viewing a dialogue that Philosophy International (PI) from the London School of Economics produced of him and Quine in their later years before a group of scholars and students at the London School of Economics.<sup>13</sup> Much of what Davidson pursues in this discussion with his former teacher is what he calls a third dogma of empiricism which Quine (claims Davidson) overlooked (indeed, committed).

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<sup>13</sup> (1997). *In conversation: Donald Davidson. "The Quine discussion."* Philosophy International (PI). London School of Economics, (video recording).

Davidson, who in the L.S.E. discussion claimed he had spent half a century trying to convince "Vann" of his "missing dogma," focused not on Quine's critical analysis in the first half of "Two Dogmas" (which most agree is analytically valid), but rather on Quine's efforts in the final sections to metaphorically characterize a dogma-free sense of science.

There, Quine invokes a C.I. Lewis-like "buzzing, blooming confusion" (a flux) upon which varying conceptual frameworks from the gods of Homer to modern science somehow impose order. But Davidson insists that this formulation (the idea of a flux) upon which varying conceptual frameworks - from the gods of Homer to modern science and beyond -- impose order, while perhaps useful in certain ways, invokes a third empiricistic dogma, namely the dogma of the flux.

Davidson says, correctly it seems to me, that there is no flux: that whatever the ordering mechanisms may be, gods, nature, particles or quanta, the world appears to us and is, ontologically speaking, "already ordered." It is a fiction and a dogma to suppose that we humans must order a flux of subjective experience (sense datum, phenomenological experience, or whatever). I can recall Davidson, himself a radical naturalist, approvingly teaching in his epistemology class of a little-known medieval theologian (Bishop Butler) who is said to have said, "Everything is what it is and not another thing!"

Lewis, Quine's teacher and very much a Kantian and a Humeian, (a modernist) apparently felt a pragmatic need to include in his ontology a "buzzing, blooming confusion" to justify the function of whatever conceptual apparatus history (and geography), i.e. culture, happens to provide us with. Quine, according to Davidson, uncritically carries on this tradition (dating back at least to Plato), but it is as much a dogma of empiricism (deriving from its idealistic roots) as either the analytic/synthetic distinction or reductionism. It is classical Davidson; for the rejection of "the flux" is not ultimately ontological; it is epistemological. The human capacity, if you will, to *connect* the "flux" and the "conceptual framework" would itself require a connector, and so on, and so on. No, says Davidson, the *connection* must be as fundamental as the *connected* and moreover it *must* be causal. For even as Davidson is cleaning out the flux, he is constructing the broom;

*connecting* all of his writings on these matters by saying in his introduction to *Essays on Actions and Events*<sup>14</sup> (the first collection of his essays): *All the essays in this book have been published elsewhere, and each was designed to be more or less free standing. But though composed over a baker's dozen of years, they are unified in theme and general thesis. The theme is the role of causal concepts in the description and explanation of human action. The thesis is that the ordinary notion of cause which enters in to scientific or common-sense accounts of non-psychological affairs is essential also to the understanding of what it is to act with a reason, to have a certain intention in acting, to be an agent, to act counter to one's own best judgment, or to act freely. Cause is the cement of the universe; the concept of cause is what holds together our picture of the universe, a picture that would otherwise disintegrate into a diptych of the mental and the physical.*" (Introduction, p. xi.)

And so we more clearly discover Davidson's philosophical conservatism. He is, ultimately, an *anti-disintegrationist*; a rehabilitationist. For all his radical analysis of particular mental acts, he must ultimately pull everything together. He is a systematic philosopher defending philosophy for philosophy's sake. Using the Wittgensteinian idea (developmental in my view) of employing philosophy to escape the limits of philosophy is turned (reacted to) by Davidson into using philosophy to clean up the mess made by philosophy. And then what? Presumably wait passively for the next mess.

I, of course, do not favor disintegration or rehabilitation. I favor development and thereby growth. Davidson seems to feel it is essential to constantly clarify philosophy, while I feel -- deriving from Wittgenstein, Marx, and Vygotsky -- that humankind must build a new world, not make up fantastical categories to explain or interpret or "cement" the old one. We don't have to hold, and therapy must not seek to hold, the world together, i.e., we neither need the flux nor the cement, we need to develop.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Davidson, D. (1980). *Essays on Actions and Events*. New York: Oxford University Press. Introduction, p.xi.

<sup>15</sup> "The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to change it." *XI Theses on Feuerbach*, written by Karl Marx in the spring of 1845.

## Philosophy goes therapeutic

Davidson's assault on Wittgenstein is equally a serious and formidable defense of the roots of modernism. Not only is it reactionary, it is a reaction formation (pardon the therapeutics again) and indeed it does not stand alone. For the reaction to the postmodern assault has been powerful and, arguably somewhat successful, though exposing.<sup>16</sup>

Certainly in psychology postmodern thinking and ideas are still relegated to the fringe while neuropsychology in its modernist guise, dominates. All the more reason why cognitive behavioral therapy (and more generally all forms of therapy) must take a political stand. In some ways, the point of this paper is to give therapy, a very critical component of psychology, a theoretical basis for "going postmodern." Cognitive behavioral therapy, the dominant therapeutic form, must lead the way.

## What is social therapy?

Social therapy is, to my way of thinking, a cognitive behavioral form of therapy. It is, after all about helping people understand better (though not necessarily cognitively) and thereby do better (as in performing better). But it endeavors to return the necessary magic to therapy by insisting on its revolutionary nature. "Revolution" as used here means neither an ideologically driven (determined) set of views imposed on people in as traditionally an authoritarian manner as the market will bear; nor is it an appeal to some highly abstract spirit best understood by studying the history of the world's varied religions. Rather, it is a conceptual revolution we seek, not a new therapy but a new way of looking at therapy and thereby of practicing it. It is a practice of method shaped by activity theorists going back at least to Vygotsky and Marx. Its tools (and results) are an updated, indeed postmodernized, dialectic greatly influenced by Wittgenstein and other relatively contemporary philosophers of mind. As well, it relies a good deal on the concept/activity of performance and has taken much from contemporary theatre and dramaturgy.

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<sup>16</sup> "In response to the postmodernist 'attitude,' they [the scientists] have given up objectivity, empirically based findings, and logical argumentation in favor of hyperbole, emotional outbursts, and arguments *ad hominem*." Newman, F. and Holzman, L. (1997). *The end of knowing: A new developmental way of learning*. London and New York. Routledge. p. 1.

But for all that, it remains a cognitive behavioral therapy. Hopefully, it is a positive advance, but as with all positive advances, it is to some extent a critique of what came before.

### **What is that critique?**

Let us go back to the beginning of our remarks. Cognitive therapy we are told is scientific in that it is based on common sense. But Gödel, Wittgenstein, Einstein and others have taught us that common sense is often less than commonsensical. The view of science invoked by the theoreticians and practitioners of traditional cognitive behavioral therapy is based on an ignorance or misunderstanding of contemporary thinking about the philosophy of mind, and more generally, philosophy of science.

By way of summing up my own brief account of that history, a revolutionary turn from modernism to a sometimes muddled postmodernism, let us consider a final and critical element in Davidson's defense of modernism.

### **More on me 'n Donald**

My earliest discussions with Davidson on these matters came early in the 1960s, while I was still a graduate student and he was justifiably identified as the genius of Stanford's philosophy department just about to set out to conquer the philosophical world. He did. Meanwhile, I sought to turn my intellectual efforts to radical organizing and psychology. I did not presume that Davidson and I would run into each other again. But we have.

My Ph.D. dissertation, written under the direct supervision of Daniel Bennett, a brilliant young Wittgensteinian at the time and ironically a former student and then a colleague of Davidson, was a study of the concept of explanation in history. And an analytical consideration of such matters required a reading of Carl Hempel's "The Function of General Laws in History."

Davidson, a friend of Hempel, very much admired some of the positions that Hempel took in his important essay and naturally to begin with (this is the first law of graduate school) so did I. But as I proceeded in studying what was then contemporary philosophy of history reading Scriven, Dray and others, I grew more and more wary of Hempel's logical positivist position.

Davidson and I sadly parted ways before anything resembling a deepening of that discussion. But in my own mind I have been having it with Donald ever since. It is something like Donald's discussion with "Vann" on "the flux." In many of my imaginary discussions, I say to Donald: "But look, Carl Hempel was a highly dedicated empiricist and yet he speaks of the function of general laws in history. But there are no general laws in history."

Perhaps a rare historian seeks to speculate on the existence of such a law, but in almost 100% of historical writings there are no such laws to be found. How odd then that Hempel, a confirmed radical empiricist, is seeking to discover the function of the non-existent laws. Perhaps Hempel's essay might have been called "Why there should be" or "How there could be" general laws in history. But not "The Function of General Laws in History." Many years ago, Scriven made something very close to this point.

I, of course, do not know Davidson's response to my imaginary polemic since we never had it. But in my reconsideration of Davidson's lifelong defense of modernism, I see what he found attractive in Hempel's almost bizarrely entitled paper for the most essential claim in Hempel's view is that there must be a connection between what is explained and its explanation (in Hempel's Latin, the *explanans* and the *explanandum*).

For in the final analysis, while causality might be the cement, connectedness (in Hempel's case, deducibility) is the justification for the logical positivist and indeed for the modernist and eventually for the early scientist's claim that everything must be connected. But if and when everything is connected we lose the magic (or more accurately put, we lose the space for the magic) that is necessary for human development. Surely therapists must be sensitive to this.

Vygotsky speaks to the child's learning process in such language as the child "growing a head taller than him/herself." Some may write this off as metaphor. I do not. I think it points to the essence of growth. And it is equally applicable to cognitive growth and to emotive growth; and to grown-ups as well as the child.

Davidson, in my view, betrays the depth of his commitment to modernism by his dogmatic defense of connectedness. There are two major arguments, it seems to me, against *connectedness*. The first is that there is

no need for *connectedness* because everything is connected. This argument is something like (bears a family resemblance to) Davidson's argument against the flux/conceptual framework picture. The second argument is that everything isn't connected.

Cognitive behavioral therapy requires a theoretical basis to move in a postmodern direction. Modernist science and the demand for everything being "connected" costs us the space for magic, not tricks and games, but the real magic of real science. CBT's argument that science and scientific psychology is commonsensical not only eliminates the magic, but that framework adds to people's neuroses. For in eliminating the "space for magic," a concept critical for understanding human development, it seems to me, we eliminate the possibility of cure. Vygotsky's idea of "performing a head taller than one's self" is based on the notion of performing what one is becoming. Is Vygotsky suggesting that one literally grows a second head, making one a "head taller"?

In social therapy -- once again a cognitive behavioral therapy, but primarily a group therapy -- the second head is the creating of the group. And both from the personal or individual point of view and from the broader social point of view, it is the creating of the group that is the revolutionary activity necessary for further human development.

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