

Did I Really Say That?

A miscellany of my writings

Being published to coincide with my 80th birthday, this is a selection of writings from my fertile pen - and there's a cliché if ever I penned one [see article on page 152] - although it is surprisingly missing from Eric Partridge's excellent *A Dictionary of Clichés*.

The writing covers a large range, comprising verse written in the immediate post-war period (No! World War II!) and including much material from the magazines I have been associated with, generally as editor as well as contributor.

Inevitably it has not been possible - for reasons of space, time and cost - to include my twenty or so short stories, the seven one-hour TV plays, the two TV pilot series scripts, the vast output of music and lyrics (dating from the 1950s, before the death of ballads), or my two musical comedies. Their absence from these pages is probably no great loss. Anyway, the manuscripts will form part of my estate - to the chagrin of my executors.

People, on learning that I am a writer, almost invariably ask me what I write. They are convinced that I am being facetious when I respond: "Words".

But the response is not intended to be facetious. For, after all, what else could I say that simply conveys the vast output of such diverse forms?

So I hope, dear Reader, that within these pages you will find a word that you like.

And to you, and the other readers who have so graciously tolerated me over the past half a century, I dedicate this book.

With love,
Joe Sinclair

Books by Joseph Sinclair:

Refrigerated Transportation (Published by ASPEN) -1988
Refrigerated Containers (Published by The World Bank, Washington DC,
USA -1989
An ABC of NLP (Published by ASPEN) -1992
Arteries of War (Published by Airline) - 1992
An ABC of NLP (2nd Edition, expanded with additional material by Stephen
Bray. (Published by ASPEN) - 1998
Peace of Mind is a Piece of Cake (co-authored by Michael Mallows)
(Published by Crown House) - 1998
Refrigerated Transportation (New updated edition, published by Witherby) -
1999
Publishing Your Book (Published by ASPEN) - 2001
The Torturous Scheme (Published by ASPEN) - 2001
Peace of Mind is a Piece of Cake (Chinese edition, published by Crown
House) - 2004

Magazines and journals, produced, published and/or edited:

Letting Go (Centre for Attitudinal Healing, London)
GRTA Bulletin (Group Relations Training Association)
Groupvine (Group Relations Training Association)
IPN News (Independent Practitioners' Network)
New Learning (The NLP/Education Network)
SeaCo Confidential (Sea Containers Services)
Nurturing Potential

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First published 2009

ISBN 0 9513660 5 X

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Printed in the United Kingdom by
Antony Rowe, England

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Preface

The material published in this book is not original. It has been cobbled together from a number of sources, primarily those magazines and journals that have been acknowledged on page 2.

As I have said in the Introduction, there is inevitably an absence of most of my longer works, but a number of smaller pieces, culled from the diaries and notebooks I have maintained over the years, have been used as occasional space fillers in these pages.

It was my late, and greatly lamented, dear friend and colleague, Rob Ward who encouraged me to indulge my passion for aphorisms, limericks and (his personal favourites) clerihews, and aided and abetted me in producing many of the cabarets that marked the end-of-year Sea Containers festivities. I have drawn on some of these for the aforementioned space fillers.

I offer them with scant hope of filling the reader with as much delight as Rob and I got from their production, and they are repeated really as a memorial to him.

Here are two items that were written specifically with Rob in mind, both in clerihew form.

First an entry I made in the Visitors' Book at his cottage in Portland, Dorset, where my family and I spent several enjoyable holidays, :

It's nice to know
That one can count on Ward
To have a holiday one could not otherwise afford.

And in despair at the rarely useful 2-hour Sea Containers' Services weekly Managers' Meeting,

It is said that Rob Ward
Is eternally bored
At the constantly self-defeating Monday morning meeting.

Belief Systems

Belief Systems

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Know thyself
The wise men said
But danger here does dwell
For peace of mind could suffer
Should you know yourself too well.

Any affinity between your reality
and mine is purely coincidental

Corpses Do Bleed

There was a man who believed he was a corpse. He wouldn't eat, wouldn't work. He just sat around claiming he was a corpse. He was sent for psychiatric assessment.

The psychiatrist argued with the man at considerable length, but was unable to convince him that he was not really dead. Finally the psychiatrist asked: "Do corpses bleed?"

The man considered the question and then replied: "No. Once the bodily functions have ceased, there can be no bleeding."

The psychiatrist produced a needle and jabbed it into the man's thumb, and the man looked at the blood in total amazement. Finally the man said: "My word! Corpses do bleed!"

What are beliefs?

"Belief is a wise wager" - Blaise Pascal

Beliefs are assumptions that we adopt to help us make sense out of experience. Over a period of time, during which they are apparently validated, they may become confused with facts. If I believe I am a corpse I will fit all evidence to the contrary into the frame of reference that validates the belief and denies contradictory evidence.

Frequently beliefs are based on childhood experiences and develop into a state of mind that legitimises them. Certainly if we are brought up in a warm caring home that nurtures us, protects us and encourages love and respect, we will develop a completely different belief system from one based on an upbringing in an abusive environment without a constructive set of values.

One definition of a belief system is *"a patterning of the mind relating to cause, meaning and boundaries in our environment, our behaviour, our capabilities or our identities. If we receive the message that we are unlikely or unable to do something, the chances are that our mind will reinforce such a belief and we will not be able to do it. On the other hand, if our nervous system feeds our brains with congruent messages that something is within our power to achieve, then we will almost certainly achieve it."*^[1]

The messages our brains receive that limit belief in our ability to do something fall into one or more of three categories: Hopelessness (i.e. it cannot be done); Helplessness (i.e. I am prohibited from doing it); Worthlessness (I am incapable of doing it). Recognition of these limitations is helpful to parents and teachers in fostering positive beliefs. It is important also to realise that simply denying the validity of a negative belief is not sufficient to change it; it is essential to replace it with a positive belief.

A doctor is asked: "How do I give up smoking?" He replies: "Have a heart attack!" The knowledge that smoking is harmful is not, of itself, sufficient normally to effect a change. The demonstration that death is a real possibility may provide the emotionally positive stimulus that is needed.

Some time ago I noted three other belief-system categories (but, alas, no longer recall their derivation): **Uncritical**, **Uncaring**, **Unprepared**. I'm not sure what definitions they were given in their original source, but they strike me as being very appropriate to this article, and lend themselves readily to definitions of my own.

For me **Uncritical** would be a passive, almost fatalistic, acceptance of what is or whatever may befall. It doesn't matter what I believe, or what I do, I will never succeed in changing things, so why waste my energy on trying? Believe what you will, I might say, but don't expect me to offer any contrary views. I am content to simply flow with the tide.

The **Uncaring** category would acknowledge that an individual, or a group, may be able to effect change, but still asks: why bother? I may have other views than you, and so be it. I shall go my way and if you want to go to hell in a bucket, who am I to disabuse you?

And the **Unprepared** is the person who "has the answers" but is unwilling to share them. I'm not good enough (intelligent enough, developed enough, educated enough) to argue my case with you. I'm simply not willing to put myself in the front line.

"... Now I'll give you something to believe. I'm just one hundred and one, five months and a day."

"I can't believe that!" said Alice.

"Can't you?" the Queen said in a pitying tone. "Try again: draw a long breath, and shut your eyes."

Alice laughed. "There's no use trying," she said "one can't believe impossible things."

"I daresay you haven't had much practice," said the Queen. "When I was your age, I always did it for half-an-hour a day. Why, sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast..."

- Lewis Carroll, Through the Looking Glass

Belief and Faith

Faith is belief in something that may defy logic, or lack evidence, or even in spite of evidence to the contrary. It is a non-rational belief. *“Faith is the great cop-out, the great excuse to evade the need to think and evaluate evidence.”*^[2] Belief was what drove Galileo Galilei to maintain that the earth moves round the sun despite being condemned to die for heresy by people of “faith”. Not against Galileo could the charges of Uncritical, Uncaring or Unprepared be levied. (*“Epur si muove* - and yet it does move” was his response.) Faith would have me maintain that the earth is flat despite the evidence of space travel. It is not, however, a belief I would be prepared to die for.

Sri Chinmoy has said^[3] “Belief is usually in the mind, whereas faith is in the heart,” thereby providing substantial validation to Richard Dawkins’ great cop-out comment. I could, nevertheless, accept Sri Chinmoy’s statement with a grain of salt did he not continue . . . “Belief, unfortunately, has doubt as its immediate neighbour . . . Doubt is nothing short of poison . . . when doubt enters into our mind we can make no progress . . . Doubt is a dangerous road that leads to destruction.

“Faith has conviction as its immediate neighbour. We can be very happy and very cheerful when faith abides in our heart . . . Belief has, faith is . . . “

Tell it to the birds, say I. Better still, dig him up and tell it to Galileo.

Lacking doubt we would have made little scientific or sociological progress. I admit there may be some who will hold that that might not have been a bad thing. But Darwin rules, okay. I think it was Voltaire who said “If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent him.” Personally I prefer Clarence Darrow: “I don’t believe in God because I don’t believe in Mother Goose.”

When anyone claims that faith is the reason they believe in something, what they are really saying is that they have no valid reason whatsoever for holding their belief, but they believe anyway because they feel like it. Faith is nothing more than wishful thinking. Indeed, confronted by one whose faith tells them that god created the universe, I might equally claim that the universe was created by Mother Goose. One statement is as impossible of proof as the other.

“I contend that we are both atheists. I just believe in one fewer god than you do. When you understand why you dismiss all the other possible gods, you will understand why I dismiss yours.”^[4]

Belief, Reality and Reason

I believe in miracles.

I believe the world is full of miracles and that we fail to recognise them.

It may seem absurd to make such a statement in a section devoted to reality and reason, but it simply depends upon how a miracle is defined. My belief is not concerned with supernatural stories of water turning into wine, or the biblical feeding of 5000, or the virgin birth, or the resurrection of Jesus, or Mohamed flying to the moon on his horse. These events hold no overwhelming interest for me and, if I were to consider them at all, it would be with a totally sceptical gaze.

For me a miracle is a much simpler event and one which occurs and recurs frequently, and is taken so much for granted that its miraculousness is habitually ignored. It is anything that fills me with wonderment, or joy, or love. It is a perfectly formed teardrop; the gold of a leaf in autumn; the first apple and peach blossoms in spring; the sight of a loved one in bed beside me when I awake. It is the recognition that I have forgiven the past and let it go; that I have not merely forgiven others, but also forgiven myself. It is the recognition that what I thought had been done to me had not really occurred outside my own mind.

A child will look upon a natural event with an air of wonderment. To the adult who has seen hundreds of rainbows, the sight of yet one more is merely the evidence of a known and natural event: the dispersion of the sun's rays through water. To the child who sees a rainbow for the first time, it is a miracle. And yet how many adults, faced with the recurring sight of a rainbow, does not share Wordsworth's "heart leap". Sad it would be, a loss it is, to cease to exult in the wonder, the miracle, of natural events.

Much as I admire the incisive mind and logic of the eighteenth century philosopher David Hume, had I not already stated that it all depends upon one's definition, I would certainly take issue with his statement that "a miracle is a violation of the laws of nature" ^[5] For me, the laws of nature *are* the miracle. I still recall (albeit perhaps imperfectly) the discussion in a train, in G.K. Chesterton's *The Man Who Was Thursday*, between a scientist and a poet; the one extolling and the other deploring the marvel of knowing that the next station would be the one shown on the map overhead; the reassurance of knowing that the next station could be anticipated with one hundred per cent certainty versus the poetry of believing that it just might prove to be a new station. God's in his heaven; all's right with the world, versus Mother Goose is up there somewhere, just waiting to produce a fairytale ending. And it doesn't matter whether the ending confirms or contradicts one's belief ^[6], it may still be defined as a miracle.

To revert to Hume. He continues . . . "Nothing is esteemed a miracle, if it ever happen in the common course of nature. . . " and "no testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle, unless the testimony be of such a kind that its falsehood would be more miraculous, than the fact, which it endeavours to establish . . . " ^[7] . He then, in the exercise of the incisive and objective intellect he always displays, states "I immediately consider with myself, whether it be more probable, that this person should either deceive or be deceived, or that the fact, which he relates,

should really have happened. I weigh the one miracle against the other; and according to the superiority, which I discover, I pronounce my decision, and always reject the greater miracle. If the falsehood of his testimony would be more miraculous, than the event which he relates; then, and not till then, can he pretend to command my belief or opinion.” But he cannot then resist: “But it is easy to shew, that we have been a great deal too liberal in our concession, and that there never was a miraculous event established on so full an evidence.”^[8]

Hume contends that it is not unreasonable to believe only that which we can prove. In other words, it requires faith to believe in miracles, and those who embrace faith are embracing only illusion. He says, “our most holy religion is founded on faith, not on reason.”^[9] And in this context he means what he calls “blind faith”. Only through proof can the truth be sought [proof is the tool of reason and the opposite of miracle]. On the other hand, those that embrace faith are embracing only illusion. To believe in something that cannot be proven can only lead to a falsehood that cannot prevail. This why reason is superior to faith - it never fails you. Reason is the way of using the intellect, the brain, to verify beliefs.

I believe this. I believe this will all my mind and (dare I say?) heart. But I also deplore it. I *want* to believe in miracles. So my solution has been to redefine the word miracle to fit in with my personal philosophy, my own belief system. Anything can be a miracle . . . even when it is not!

I feel very comfortable with this thought. And very comforted by it.

And I am also comforted by some final words of David Hume. “*The belief in a miraculous event tends to have no real evidence through man’s hope . . . There is no right or wrong belief. It is viewed through our own individual perception and faith, our existence and sense of reality.*”

Corpses do bleed!

Footnotes and references

[1] *An ABC of NLP* by Joseph Sinclair, ASPEN 1992.

[2] Richard Dawkins

[3] <http://www.illuminingtalks.org> (belief and faith)

[4] Stephen Roberts - <http://www.wildlink.com>

[5] David Hume: *On Miracles*, one of the essays in his *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*.

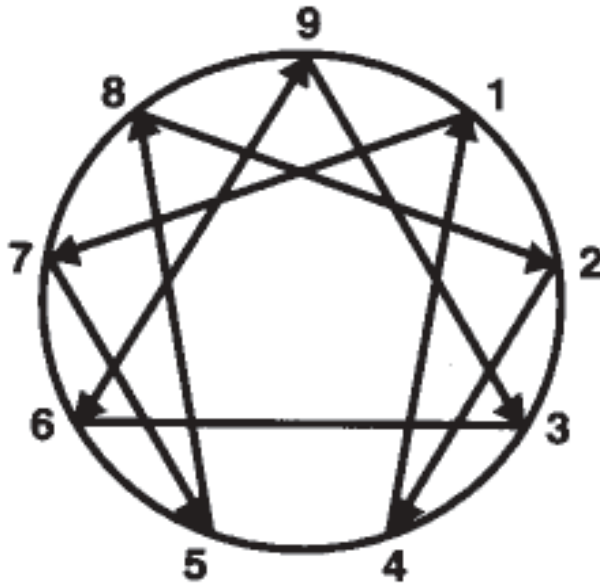
[6] “Belief” in this case equating to “expectation”, i.e. whether one expects a natural sequence of events to recur or hopes that - just this once! - it might not.

[7] Op cit

[8] Ibid

[9] Ibid

The Enneagram



An enneagram is, literally, a drawing with nine lines.

The Enneagram is a New Age mandala to personality typing. The drawing is based upon a belief in the mystical properties of the numbers 7 and 3. It consists of a circle with nine equidistant points on the circumference. The points are connected by two figures: one connects the number 1 to 4 to 2 to 8 to 5 to 7 and back to 1; the other connects 3, 6 and 9. The 142857 sequence is based on the fact that dividing 7 into 1 yields an infinite repetition of the sequence 142857. In fact, dividing 7 into any whole number not a multiple of 7 will yield the infinite repetition of the sequence 142857. Also, $142857 \times 7 = 999999$. And of course 1 divided by 3 yields an infinite sequence of threes. The triangle joining points 3, 6 and 9 links all the numbers on the circle divisible by 3. To ascribe metaphysical or mystical significance to the properties of numbers is mere superstition and a throwback to an earlier time in human history when, as Scott Adams' Dilbert might have it, ignorance was considered a point of view.

The enneagram represents nine personality types. How the types are defined depends on whom you ask. Some define them by a *fundamental weakness or sin*. Others define them by a fundamental *energy* that drives one's entire being. Some follow classical biorhythm theory and classify the nine types according to

three types of types: mental, emotional and physical. Others classify the nine types according to three types of instinctual drives: the Self-Preserving drives, the Social drives and the Sexual drives. Some follow Gurdjieff, who claims to have followed Sufism, and type the types as *mental*, *emotional* and *instinctual*.

The “father” of the enneagram is acknowledged to be Oscar Ichazo who learned of the enneagram through Ouspensky’s writings of Gurdjieff. He called his system *Arica*, after the coastal city in northern Chile, near the Peruvian border, where he opened his first school. In the early 1990s.

Ichazo would make claims like ‘the dominant passion of the *Indolent* fixation is *Sloth*; the dominant passion of the *Resentment* fixation is *Anger*; and the dominant passion of the *Flattery* fixation is *Pride*.’ In short, he developed a typology of “ego fixations” based on the classical Christian notion of the seven cardinal sins plus *fear* and *deceit*.

Ichazo claims to have been trained in the mystical arts of Sufism, the kabala and Zen, and to have studied martial arts, yoga, Buddhism, Confucianism, the I Ching and alchemy. ..He began teaching the enneagram, he states, after spending a week in a “divine coma” and has never claimed to have a scientific basis for his theory of personality types. His notions were based on visions and insights taken from numerous eclectic sources and freely mixed into an amalgam of mystical psychobabble.

Like Gurdjieff, he claimed we are born with an essence (nature) which conflicts with our personality (nurture), and we must struggle to harmonize the two and return to our true essence. He founded his Arica Institute in the late 1960s. The Institute continues to exist, though it has contracted somewhat from its heyday in the early 1990s, and now offers training in “Nine Hypergnostic Systems” and *T’ai chi chuan* in centres in New York and Europe.

Several former disciples have modified Ichazo’s teachings during the past twenty years. Claudio Naranjo attended Ichazo’s lectures on ennead personality types in Santiago, Chile, in the 1970’s and published a book called *Enneatypes in Psychotherapy* in 1995. A Jesuit priest named Bob Ochs got the enneagrams from Naranjo and taught courses on enneagrams at Loyola University in Chicago in 1971. Naranjo also taught Helen Palmer, who claims to be carrying on the esoteric oral tradition in her writings, but changed the terminology: *enneagram* replaced *enneagon*, and *personality type* replaced *ego fixation*.

Each personality type is numbered and labelled [See head of next page].

Palmer says that the “Enneagram is a psychological and spiritual system with roots in ancient traditions.” She types people by fundamental weakness or sin: *anger*, *pride*, *envy*, *avarice*, *gluttony*, *lust*, *sloth*, *fear*, and *deceit*. She calls these weaknesses “capital tendencies.” Each of us has a personality that is dominated by one of the nine capital tendencies. Knowing what type you, and what type others are, will put you on the road to “self-understanding and empathy, giving rise to improved relationships,” says Palmer. .

The Perfectionist	One	Anger
The Giver	Two	Pride
The Performer	Three	Deceit
The Romantic	Four	Envy
The Observer	Five	Avarice
The Trooper	Six	Fear
The Epicure	Seven	Gluttony
The Boss	Eight	Lust
The Mediator	Nine	Sloth

Personality typing is somewhat arbitrary. The classification systems used by Ichazo, and modified by Palmer and others according to their own idiosyncratic beliefs, are not without merit. For example, one certainly could learn much of importance about oneself by focusing on one's central fault or faults, but those who advocate using the enneagram seem to be interested in much more than a bit of self-knowledge. Entire metaphysical systems, psychologies, religions, cosmologies and New Age springboards to higher consciousness and fuller being are said to be found by looking into the enneagram. There is seemingly no end to what one can find in these nine lines.

Here are some examples of distinctive behavioural aspects of these types:

One. The Perfectionist, also Reformer and Critic. Seekers of truth. But tend to dissociate themselves from discovered flaws and become hypocritical.

Two. The Giver. Also Helper and Caretaker. Compassionate, thoughtful and generous. But can be manipulative and clinging. Want to be loved and needed.

Three. The Performer. Also Succeeder and Achiever. Chameleon-like in desire for approval. Want to be valued and fear being denigrated.

Four. The Romantic. Individualist and Artist. Fear their own insignificance. Highly individual and often deeply creative. Introspective and may sink into depression.

Five. The Observer. Thinker and Investigator. Judge their worth by their own contribution. Withdraw from participation unless they feel they can contribute something earth-shattering. Fear uselessness and tend to reclusiveness.

Six. The Trooper. Loyalist and Defender. Desire stability. Are loyal and display responsibility, but are prone to anxiety and passive-aggressive behaviour. Main fear is the lack of support and guidance.

Seven. The Epicure. Enthusiast and Materialist. Flit from one activity to another and are too afraid of disappointment to enjoy what they have.

Eight. The Boss. Leader and Protector. Natural leaders, capable and passionate, but also manipulative, ruthless, and prepared to destroy anything in their way. They need to be in control and fear being harmed or controlled by others.

Nine. The Mediator. Also Peacemaker and Preservationist. Ruled by their empathy. May be perceptive, receptive, gentle and calming, but prefer to dissociate from conflicts and will withdraw from interaction in order to seek peace of mind.

What is the Self-Change Model?

Calling it the Self-Change Model makes the concept more accessible than referring to The Transtheoretical Model of Change as it was named by Prochaska & DiClemente in 1983. ^[1]

Originally directed at behaviour change in connection with health issues, and particularly as relating to the smoking habit, it gradually developed into an effective integrative model for all forms of behaviour change. The model describes how people modify a problem behaviour or transform it into a positive behaviour. Central to the model are the various stages of change.

The Self-Change Model is less concerned – certainly less than other similar models – with the social influences on behaviour, but focuses primarily on decision-making behavioural patterns. It has been found effective in such areas as nicotine addiction, exercise, dieting, organisational change, and stress management, amongst many others.

The model's major contribution is the recognition that behaviour change unfolds through a series of stages. Individuals and organisations progress through these stages in recognising the need to change, contemplating a change, making a change, and finally sustaining the new behaviour. Most importantly, it is crucial to understand and identify the stage that has been reached in order to design and apply a successful change intervention.

Five stages have been identified as forming the primary “building blocks” of the Model. This is the process by which self-change progresses.

Precontemplation is the initial stage. People in this stage are not intending to take action in the foreseeable future, typically regarded as the next six months. They may have tried to change before without success, and this has depressed them, or they are not sufficiently aware of their behaviour patterns and the possible consequences thereof. This stage is characterised by lack of awareness, lack of willingness, easy discouragement. Persuasion is the worst strategy. Empathy, listening, concentration on the positive effects of change is the best strategy.

Contemplation is the stage in which people are intending to change in the next six months. They are more aware of the pros of changing but are also acutely aware of the cons. This ambivalence can keep them stuck in this stage for long periods of time. But as people in this stage are open to the intake of information, it is a good stage for giving information and providing emotional support.

Preparation is the stage in which people are intending to take action in the immediate future, usually measured as the next month. They have normally already

taken some significant action in the past year, and may intend to join an exercise class, or a therapy group, consult a doctor or a counsellor, or even simply buy a self-help book. Best strategies include goal-setting, praise for their efforts, and enlisting the support of others.

At the **Action** stage people have already modified their behaviours within the past six months. Not all modifications of behaviour, however, count as action in this model. In the case of nicotine or drug addiction, for example, people must attain a criterion that professionals agree is sufficient to reduce risks to health. The Action stage is also the stage where vigilance against relapse is critical. At this stage reinforcement of positive behaviour and continuing emotional support are to be recommended.

Maintenance is the stage in which people are working to prevent relapse but they do not apply change processes as frequently as do people in Action. They are less tempted to backslide and increasingly more confident that they can continue their change. Emotional support should be continued while being aware of the possibility of relapse.

This major contribution to behaviour change theory has helped to clarify and explain the statistical knowledge that most people, faced with change, are not ready to take action. As an example, consider those people who have the desire but lack the ability to give up smoking; or the gap between the awareness of a physical or medical problem and the taking of specific action to deal with it. Using the self-change model enables a far more effective treatment by moving people (or organisations) from one stage to the next rather than trying to move them directly to Action.

Questions that might be asked to determine intervention procedures include:

What? What needs to change? This enables behaviour patterns to be portrayed so that issues faced may be targeted in individuals and organisations.

When? Transtheoretical awareness helps to identify the stage reached and thus the individual's or organisation's readiness to take and sustain action.

How? The processes of change may not be revealed by individuals or organisations, but their activities provide a clue to how changes are occurring from one stage to the next.

Why? Identification of the pros and cons of changing helps in maintaining a balance and can provide the link between knowledge and action.

Decisional Balance and Self-Efficacy

Before leaving the subject of the self-change model, two other components need to be mentioned.

First is the **decisional balance**. This states simply that before change can occur from an unhealthy to a healthy behaviour, the pros must outweigh the cons. In precontemplation there are more cons (more reasons not to change) than there are pros (reasons to change). In precontemplation, therefore, the emphasis should be on increasing the pros. When moving onward, for instance from contemplation to preparation and action, the emphasis needs to reinforce the decreasing of the cons.

Self-Efficacy is the belief that the challenge of making a change can be met and maintained. Using the Self-Change Model as a therapeutic tool, we need to reinforce that belief and encourage people to move from one stage to the next rather than put pressure on them to move too far ahead, or to take action too precipitately.

[1] Prochaska, J. O., & DiClemente, C. C. (1983). *Stages and processes of self-change of smoking: Toward an integrative model of change*. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 51, 390-395.

Note: The following article gives a more detailed description of the Self-Change Model and examples of its application in different areas of healing and activity. See also my article in the Business section on *The Self-Change Model and Teamwork*.

Processes of Change

Change is a process, not an event.

A model for change is only as effective as its ability to serve in the process of change.

Models of all kind are interesting pointers to uncharted territories, or for providing new vistas of familiar systems. They may be exciting, eye-opening, imagination-rousing, mind-broadening, or simply interestingly innovative, but they remain somewhat sterile without the ability to effect change. A map is only useful if the territory it represents is accessible.

The Transtheoretical Model of Change not only displays a territory marked by the five signposts of Precontemplation, Contemplation, Preparation, Action and Maintenance, but it provides strategies and processes that may be readily and effectively applied in most areas of existence where change – or momentum – is desirable or desired. There is a considerable literature available for detailed exploration of these processes, much of it on the Internet, and I will be providing some signposts for you to access that information at the end of this article. First, however, I want to give a fairly brief overview of how the processes may be applied.

I have chosen four areas to illustrate this. Firstly a condition for which the TTM was much used in its early days (and, indeed, persists): that of addiction. Secondly, its application to student motivation. Thirdly, as applied to team development and team leadership. Finally, as I have myself experimented with it, in the area of plotting and scriptwriting.

On the next page is a visual representation of how the processes of change interact with the stages of change:

As can be seen, the processes commence at different times in the stages of change. This illustration features ten processes. The original model by Prochaska and others featured nine. Different writers give different names to some of the processes. Sometimes they are put in a different order. But the basic concepts remain the same.

Let me take them in the order in which they appear above, with a brief illustration of how they can be applied to our four studies. Note that these are merely suggested options and you may very well come up with more appropriate examples for yourselves.

Consciousness Raising. Increased awareness about causes, consequences, and cures.

(a) Addictions (Drugs, Smoking, etc.). Discovering and learning new health facts.

(b) Student Motivation. Questions may have been raised about falling grades.

(c) Teams and Leadership. Group performance is less than satisfactory. There may be a sense of apathy. Perhaps a complaint has been made.

PRECONTEMPLATION	CONTEMPLATION	PREPARATION	ACTION	MAINTENANCE
Consciousness raising Dramatic relief Environmental re-evaluation				
	Social Liberation Self re-evaluation			
		Self liberation		
			Reinforcement management Helping relationships Counter-conditioning Stimulus control	

Based on Prochaska et al. 1992

(d) Plotting. A problem situation is established. It needs to be interpreted, confronted, and behavioural patterns defined.

Dramatic Relief. An emotional reaction to a situation may be experienced.

(a) Addictions (Drugs, Smoking, etc.). The person may experience fear and worry about the consequences of their behaviour.

(b) Student Motivation. A poor examination result may produce a sudden, sharp shock.

(c) Teams and Leadership. The loss of a contract may lead to questioning leadership style or group motivation.

(d) Plotting. An event occurs that produces a reaction to the situation. At this stage the concern and involvement of the protagonist may be stated.

Environmental Re-evaluation. An assessment of how the behaviour may impact on one's social environment.

(a) Addictions (Drugs, Smoking, etc.). The potential harm and discomfort to other people from one's addiction may come into awareness.

(b) Student Motivation. Concern may be experienced about how falling grades or failure in examinations may affect family and friends.

(c) Teams and Leadership. How is the behaviour of the team leader or any individuals in the team affecting an external situation?

(d) Plotting. What is happening outside the protagonist's cognition? It is time to bring in other characters and show the potential effect on them of the problem situation.

Social Liberation. An awareness of opportunities available to one that could result from a change in behaviour.

(a) Addictions (Drugs, Smoking, etc.). How might my quality of life improve if I changed my habits?

(b) Student Motivation. How might I become more academically successful? What would it cost me? What would I gain?

(c) Teams and Leadership. [Leader] Might a change in leadership style produce a positive response in the team? [Team] Might a more cooperative response produce benefits that I do not currently enjoy?

(d) Plotting. The introduction of other characters and, consequently, a shift in emphasis, produces unexpected or unexplored options.

Self-re-evaluation. A growing recognition of our own failure to perform adequately or positively leads to reappraisal.

(a) Addictions (Drugs, Smoking, etc.). I begin to imagine myself free of the undesirable habit.

(b) Student Motivation. I begin to explore possibilities and potential results of greater attention to study; doing more than the minimum requirement; completing assignments more regularly.

(c) Teams and Leadership. Both Leader and team members start to examine the reward system, personal motivation, and level of skills.

(d) Plotting. What will happen now if the protagonist changes a behaviour, or if one of the characters takes a positive action.

Self Liberation. A decision is taken and a commitment made to changing the problem behaviour.

(a) Addictions (Drugs, Smoking, etc.). Joining a self-help group. Taking a course of study. Buying a "How-to . . ." book.

(b) Student Motivation. Resolutions: assignments will be completed on time; homework will be produced as required; grades will be improved.

(c) Teams and Leadership. Decisions can no longer be deferred. Perhaps a training programme may be introduced; outside consultants brought in; coaching and mentoring to be arranged.

(d) Plotting. A decision is taken that introduces an entirely new factor to the plot equation.

Reinforcement Management. A reward given to oneself or provided by others will help to reinforce the positive commitment to the change.

(a) Addictions (Drugs, Smoking, etc.). It is essential to be aware of the danger of negative feedback that might cause a relapse.

(b) Student Motivation. Stress management skills need to be employed in order to prevent relapse.

(c) Teams and Leadership. Specific and detailed tasks may be devised in order to reinforce the programme of action, plus a system of performance-related rewards.

(d) Plotting. A metaphorical "carrot on the end of a string" may be introduced. There would be a prize on offer - something to be gained - if an objective is attained. Will success grace efforts?

Helping Relationships. Accepting the support of others. Learning to trust them and, if necessary, to lean upon them.

(a) Addictions (Drugs, Smoking, etc.). This is the time for friends and families to offer unstinting help, emotional support and praise. Be available!

(b) Student Motivation. Students who have clearly made an effort to change their earlier disruptive or negative behaviour patterns need to be validated. If they feel their efforts are not appreciated, they may decide: "What the hell! Is it worth it?"

(c) Teams and Leadership. Team Leaders must hold themselves available to support the efforts of their team members. Inaccessibility will deter colleagues and subordinates in their efforts and may undo all the good that has been achieved.

(d) Plotting. Help is at hand. The efforts of protagonist may find support, possibly from an unexpected quarter. And a seemingly negative situation may suddenly become positive and hopeful.

Counter-Conditioning. Substituting alternatives for the problem behaviour.

(a) Addictions (Drugs, Smoking, etc.). Relaxation. Palliatives. Healthy pursuits, such as walking, swimming, cycling. A change of diet.

(b) Student Motivation. Assertiveness to counter peer pressure.

(c) Teams and Leadership. Public presentations; public appearances. Action in place of previous apathy. Actively seeking out situations where ability to lead or to fulfill tasks may be revealed.

(d) Plotting. Introducing a new factor that brings turmoil into the situation that had appeared to be under control

Stimulus Control. Adopting measures and other behaviours to control situations where previously the problem behaviour might be triggered.

(a) Addictions (Drugs, Smoking, etc.). Cues for unhealthy habits are removed and healthy alternatives are put in their place. For example, end a meal with a cup of tea to remove the stimulus of a cigarette with a cup of coffee. Avoid bars and other smoky environments.

(b) Student Motivation. Refrain from the habits that encouraged sloth in study - perhaps watching TV, listening to the wrong kind of music, the kind that energised rather than relaxed. Develop new habits in an environment that will encourage study.

(c) Teams and Leadership. Give constant publicity to all successes and avoid focusing on failures. Organise get-togethers, team meetings, conferences, where the focus is on achievement.

(d) Plotting. Introduce "red herrings". Have your characters confronted with threatening situations needing resolution.

The Self-Change Model and Teamwork

An early issue of *Nurturing Potential* examined the application of the processes of the Self-Change Model in various areas, including that of business. It occurred to me that knowledge of the *Stages of Change* themselves would have been an effective tool for me to have used in my role as team leader of a commercial group some years ago, and I came up with the following:

PRECONTEMPLATION

As team leader I am unaware of a loss of impetus in the team; a sort of lethargy. Unaware too that any excitement that had earlier been generated in team meetings is no longer apparent. Board meetings have become bored meetings. A sort of lethargy has developed in the team, yet nobody appears to believe in a need for change.

When I do get a faint suspicion that team performance is not as effective as it might be - *as it has been* - I may put this down to factors outside my - or the team's - control. So a sort of "do not disturb" sign hangs on my mental wall, and may occasionally be slightly stirred by a minor tremor: perhaps an uncomfortable question from a superior, or a particularly apathetic or unsatisfactory response from a subordinate.

CONTEMPLATION

Slowly I become aware that all is not as it could be - as it needs to be - in the realm of corporate activity. I feel more and more uncomfortable with our performance, or lack of it. I have a nagging suspicion that something needs to change . . . but what? Do I need to offer my team members greater inducements to achieve better results? Or have I already given them too much, thereby removing any motivation to more active performance?

I start to think seriously about this. I consider ways and means, tasks and exercises, that may be used to spotlight those areas of diminished effort, or diminishing returns.

PREPARATION

I have succeeded in highlighting some of the areas where change needs to occur. I face up to the necessity of doing something about the situation, and recognise that unless something is done (*unless I do something*) things will not improve. Action cannot be deferred; decisions cannot be avoided.

Nevertheless I'm still uncertain about how and where things need to be done. I explore various options and try to establish whether a solution can be found "in-house", or whether we have to go to an outside consultant. I am quite reluctant to adopt the latter course, as I have always considered this to be the ultimate proof of my own failure to perform my duties satisfactorily.

ACTION

I have made a list of all the measures I can think of for rectifying the situation and now have to consider which of them will be most effective; or whether the situation calls for a combination of several. Amongst them (consigned to the background) is the employment of an outside consultancy. I do not want to admit to myself that perhaps I, the team leader, have failed in some way to continue inspiring my team members. Perhaps their apathy has resulted from their perception of a similar lethargy in myself.

The first step, I decide, is to discuss the situation frankly and openly with the team. I have to admit my own part in allowing the situation to develop and persist, place before the team the list of possible measures that I have devised, and ask for feedback. It may be that the philosophy of the corporation, or our own department's *raison d'être*, may have changed over the years and I, or they, have failed to notice to adjust to it. Maybe a new training programme needs to be initiated. Maybe I am personally in need of re-training or refreshing.

MAINTENANCE

Whatever may have been decided as a result of the team discussions, a programme of detailed and specific tasks must be established in order to reinforce the action that has been agreed upon. Regular meetings must be held, where individual members of the team report back on the progress of the tasks they have been allotted, are considered, and discussed constructively by the remainder of the team. Negative feedback is to be abjured as is any other tactic that might lead to a relapse and a return to the previously unacceptable situation. As team leader I am an equal part of this process. Unless I can be seen to have accepted my own responsibility for any failure to perform in the past, I cannot hope to retain the support and respect of my team.

A system of efficiency rewards might be considered as well as a new way of reporting progress and results to both subordinate staff and superiors. Goals must be established and regularly reviewed.

COMMENT

It may seem to the reader that the conclusions reached in the Contemplation and Preparation stages, and promulgated in the Action and Maintenance stages, might simply have been adopted from the start, without any need to go through the five Stages of Change. But this is to overlook the importance and benefit of using the right interventions, encouragement and actions, at the most appropriate time, for most effective results. As was so rightly pointed out in the original article, [at an early stage] "persuasion is the worst strategy. Empathy, listening, concentration on the positive effects of change is the best strategy." [Contemplation] "is a good stage for giving information". And finally: "Using the self-change model enables a far more effective treatment by moving people (or organisations) from one stage to the next rather than trying to move them directly to Action".

BUILDING BRIDGES

Building Bridges

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Love not thy neighbour as thyself
E'en though he be thy peer
Lest accusation's finger points
To judge thee naught but queer.

Have you ever tried Japanese tea?
It's yellow as yellow can be.
It seems the specifics
Of their hieroglyphics
Can't distinguish a T from a P.

Building Cultural Bridges

(We should be building bridges -
not barriers)



Here's a somewhat simplistic but neat parable of unknown origin:

John and Stephen were two brothers who lived on adjoining farms and for 40 years they farmed side by side, sharing tools and produce, in total harmony. One day they had a violent disagreement and the developing rift between them got worse and worse until finally they simply would not speak to each other.

One morning there was a knock on John's door. He opened it to find a man with a carpenter's toolbox who announced: "I'm looking for a few days work. Do you have any small jobs that I might help you with?"

"Yes," said John. "I do have a job for you. Look across the brook at my neighbour's farm. That's my younger brother. Last week there was a meadow between us and he bulldozed the river bank and now there is that brook you see there. Well, he may have done this to spite me, but I'll go one better. See that pile of lumber by the barn? I want you to build me a fence - an 8-foot fence - so I won't need to see his place anymore."

The carpenter said, "I think I understand the situation. Show me where all your materials are and I'll do a job that pleases you."

John helped the carpenter get the materials ready and then he went off to town for supplies, saying he would be away for the rest of the day.

The carpenter worked hard all that day measuring, sawing, nailing.

About sunset when the farmer returned, the carpenter had just finished his job. The farmer's eyes opened wide, his jaw dropped.

There was no fence there at all. It was a bridge . . . a bridge stretching from one side of the brook to the other! A fine piece of work. Handrails and all - and the neighbour, his younger brother Stephen, was coming across, his hand outstretched.

"You are quite a fellow to build this bridge after all I've said and done."

The two brothers met in the middle of the bridge, taking each other's hand. They turned to see the carpenter hoist his toolbox on his shoulder. "No, wait! Stay a few days. I've a lot of other jobs for you," said the older brother.

"I'd love to stay on," the carpenter said, "but, I have many more bridges to build."

Cultural Values

Are cultural values diverging or converging as a consequence of globalisation? Can a formula be developed to enable different cultures to co-exist in peace and harmony?

Before harmony can be established, knowledge has to replace ignorance. How are we to understand and appreciate other cultures if we know little or nothing about them? On a really basic level, for example, how many of us have made the effort to learn a non-western language?

The ignorance that persists between people of different nationalities and language is but a reflection of the lack of understanding of different values between different generations within nations, and even within families. Are the clashes between parents and their children really that different, in essence, from the clashes between races, religions and nationalities? Do they not all derive from a lack of empathy.

Nations will make decisions on the basis of their unique cultural and political interests and it is unlikely that any real progress will be achieved in peaceful co-existence until a global culture is created. The major problem will probably derive from the fact that bridging differences in values and cultures inevitably involves economic and political self-interest on the part of the nations concerned, whereas a successful bridge must be forged out of love, friendship and respect – three qualities to which many politicians pay cynical lip service and display total indifference.

What is Culture?

We need to distinguish “normal” culture from “formal” culture. Normal culture comprises all aspects of everyday behaviour: how we act, how we dress, how we speak, how we think, how and what we eat, how we learn, how we use language (spoken, body, and gestures), how we react physically to each other, how we deal with conflict, how we interpret and understand abstract concepts (spiritual, philosophical, emotional, intellectual, sociological, moral and political).

Formal culture by contrast comprises art, literature, music, architecture, the performing arts and all those other “higher” forms by which people express their creativity.

Culture is habitually taken for granted. We are born into our culture, we grow up in it, and it becomes a part of us and expressed in everything we do. All groups develop or have inherited their own specific cultural norms. We are usually not aware of the extent of the influence of our culture until we are confronted with people from a different culture. In the 1950s the term “culture shock” was coined by Oberg¹⁴. The world has shrunk over the decades, yet the shock would seem to have increased rather than diminished given the violence that has escalated between and within nations.

Ethnocentrism

All cultures are by their nature ethnocentric. Ethnocentrism is the belief that one's culture is superior to the cultures of others. The positive side of ethnocentrism is that it helps cultures survive. The negative side of ethnocentrism is that it leads to bigotry, prejudice and mistrust. The polarisation that has resulted from racial, religious and political conflict both illustrates and augments the failure of people to develop tolerance towards those who do not share their beliefs.

Cultural Awareness

R.G. Hanvey (in Luce and Smith, 1987)^[2] formulates four levels of cultural awareness related to the process of learning about a culture.

Level I:

Awareness of superficial or very visible cultural traits or stereotypes

Obtained from: Tourism, textbooks, National Geographic

Reactions: Unbelievable, exotic, bizarre

Level II:

Awareness of significant and subtle cultural traits that contrast markedly with one's own

Obtained from: Culture conflict situations

Reactions: Unbelievable; frustrating; irrational

Level III

Awareness of significant and subtle cultural traits that markedly contrast with one's own

Obtained from: Intellectual analysis

Reactions: Believable cognitively

Level IV:

Awareness of how another culture feels from the standpoint of the insider

Obtained from: Cultural immersion: living in the culture

Reactions: Believable because of subject familiarity

This formulation reveals that when a person knows about another culture only from tour books or textbooks, his/her knowledge at Level I is characterized by stereotypes, facts and inclinations to perceive deficiencies in the other culture. The person has many preconceived notions about the other culture.

The knowledge of the person at Level II is acquired through some cultural contact; for example, two countries that share a border. Knowledge consists of a shallow understanding of the other culture; at this level, the cultural learner is confused by many differences between the conventions of his native culture and those of the other culture.

The knowledge of a person at Level III comes through intellectual analysis, and it is characterized by an in-depth comprehension, but the person keeps his own perspective. The knowledge of a person at Level IV is acquired through living in the foreign culture. Knowledge at this level is characterized by empathy; a person learns to identify with the target culture. He can walk in the shoes of someone from the target culture.

Hanvey notes that at Levels I and II, a person does not understand the other culture enough to accept it. He states that “believability is necessary if one group of humans is to accept other members of the biological species as human” (p. 20). Thus, according to Hanvey, in order to attain awareness of the culture as highly believable, a learner needs to reach Level IV. Other experts, such as Scarcella and Oxford (1995), believe that Level II provides a good foundation for cultural understanding. Moreover, successful learners of a language and culture feel motivated to continue learning, and therefore, may reach an evaluative level of empathy. People without such exposure may not be as inclined to develop understanding for other cultures.

Culture Shock

Originally intended to describe the problems confronted by those taking up residence in a foreign country, being lonely, homesick, and neurotic, it is marked by symptoms such as anger with others for lacking understanding as well as self-pity and the display of defence mechanisms such as repression, regression, isolation, and rejection.

Weaver (1998)^[3] comments that culture shock is analogous to a cold. We can catch it over and over again, and the degree of the symptoms can vary from person to person. Some people who catch colds are inclined to suffer from severe reactions and additional stress. However, culture shock, like a cold, can be more or less harmless if we take some precautions to prevent it. For instance, *having informed knowledge of the process of culture shock will provide a sense of control and predictability* (Weaver, *op cit*). We can then develop our own coping strategies and control it as we do colds.

Gorden’s (1974)^[4] book, *Living in Latin America*, is a case study in cross-cultural communication. The book describes, analyzes, and interprets the interactions between young Peace Corp Americans as guests in Colombian homes. The book has been considered a classic probe into cross-cultural communication and miscommunication between people from different cultures. In one example from this book, Colombian *senoras* expect an American guest to keep his towel and toilet articles in his own room and to hang his towel on the service patio to dry each day. The guest fails to do that. Thus the Columbians conclude that Americans are generally thoughtless of others and do not care about their reputations. The American, on the other hand, concludes that Columbians are impractical and dirty, because he did not find any toilet articles in the bathroom and because, if there were any, they were always dirty.

Brink and Saunders^[5] have extended the work of Oberg, whose original paper described four phases of culture shock and named the first phase the “Honeymoon Phase”. The other phases were described but no named. The following attempts to name and extend Oberg’s discussion.

1. Phase One. “The Honeymoon Phase” is marked by excitement. The desire to learn about the people and their customs is great; sightseeing is anticipated with pleasure, and getting to work and accomplishing all the goals envisioned at home provide the basis for this phase. Traveleers, visiting dignitaries, and other temporary functionaries may never experience any other phase than this one.

2. Phase Two. “The Disenchantment Phase” generally does not begin until the individual has established residence, i.e. where he begins to become aware of the setting as his area of residence. This sense of awareness often is associated with the realization that one is “stuck here” and cannot get out of the situation. What was “quaint” may become aggravating. Simple tasks of living are time consuming because they must be done in a different way. This beginning awareness often results in frustration - either frustration because the indigenous population is too stubborn to see things your way, or frustration because you can’t see things their way and are constantly making social gaffes. Embarrassment, coupled with feelings of ineptness, attack self-image or self-concept. Particular, individual styles of behaviour are developed over the years through the principles of inertis and economy. Usually the individual is unaware of the operation of these principles and their effect on him. they form part of ethnocentrism. “The way I do things is the right way to do things.” The disenchantment phase directly threatens ethnocentrism because the host country believes exactly the same way about its customs and sees no reason to change its ways. Phase two incudes a re-examination of one’s self from the vanatage point of another set of values. In this phase, failure often outweighs success.

To this, add loneliness. No one knows you well enough to reaffirm your sense of self-worth. the distance from home is magnified. This form of nostalgia for the past and the familiar seems to have two effects. Mail and visitors from home assume immense importance as a contact with people who believe in you and think you are important. To protect yourself from these feelings of loneliness and lack of self-esteem, you attack the presumed cause of these feelings - the host country. Feelings of anxiety and inadequacy are often expressed through depression, withdrawal or eruptions of anger at frustration. This period in the culture shock-syndrome is the most difficult to live through and this is the period where people “give up and go home.”

3. Phase Three. “The Beginning Resolution Phase.” Oberg described this phase as the individual seeking to learn new patterns of behaviour appropriate to

the setting, attempting to make friends in the indigenous population, and becoming as much of a participant-observer as possible in the ceremonies, festivals, and daily activities of the new setting.

This phase seems to be characterized by the reestablishment of a sense of humour. Social errors no longer are devastating to the ego. The host culture no longer is considered all bad and home all wonderful. This phase seems to be facilitated greatly by the arrival of fellow countrymen who are “worse off” and need help. You can show off what you have learned, you are important because you are sought for advice, you feel needed by the newcomer.

At this point also, the individual becomes aware that things seem easier; friendships are being developed; home is still distant, but less relevant. Letters from home somehow seem peripheral to current interests and concerns. Letters to home become more superficial; explanation of what is becoming familiar would take up too much time.

Without really becoming aware of the process one slowly adapts to the new situation. Each small discovery, each small victory in learning the new rules is satisfying, and helps to restore one’s sore and damaged ego.

4. Phase Four. “The Effective Function Phase.” This means being just as comfortable in the new setting as in the old. Having achieved this phase, the individual will probably experience reverse culture shock when he returns home. Or, the individual may decide only to go home for visits, but make the new culture his own.

^[1] Dr. Lalervo Oberg; Anthropologist; Health, Welfare and Housing Division; United States Operations Mission to Brazil.

^[2] Hanvey, R.G. (1987). “International Cross-Cultural Awareness and Methods to Attain Empathy and Integration in the New Culture.” In Luce, L.F., & Smith E.C. (Eds.), *Toward Internationalism*. Newbury House Publishers.

^[3] Weaver, G. R. (1998). “Understanding and Coping With Cross-Cultural Adjustment Stress.” *Culture, Communication and Conflict: Readings in Intercultural Relations* (2nd edition). Pearsons.

^[4] Gorden, R.L. (1974). *Living in Latin America: A Case Study in Cross-Cultural Communication*. National Textbook Co.

^[5] Brink and Saunders, are two medical anthropologists.

Building Educational Bridges

A mother mouse and a baby mouse are walking along when suddenly a cat attacks them.

The mother mouse goes, "BARK!" and the cat runs away. "See?" says the mother mouse to her baby. "Now do you see why it's important to learn a foreign language?"

Cultural Differences in Education

Teachers who daily deal with multicultural classes know that the challenge goes beyond language. Routine educational methods applied successfully to students may come into bewildering conflict with immigrant students whose cultural background involves other ways of knowing and behaving. For example, a student may resist offering the right answer after another student has answered incorrectly, in order not to embarrass that person in front of the class. A student raised to value consensus may find decisions made by majority rule inconsiderate or even unfair, instead of simply democratic.

For educators wanting to help children make the transition to a new cultural environment, the challenge is first to identify, and then find ways to bridge, cultural differences that have a profound influence on learning.

Some cultures stress self-reliance and personal achievement; these are individualistic cultures. Others focus more on developing and sustaining a stable, mutually dependent group; these are collectivist cultures.

According to Kim (1987)^[1], "in socially oriented [collectivistic] societies, the cost of interdependence is experienced as suppression of individual development, while in individualistically oriented cultures, the cost of independence is experienced as alienation". The ability to relate these orientations to curricular demands, schoolwork, and expectations are a major challenge.

Like individuals and groups, schools have cultures, too. These usually mirror the culture of the dominant society. Often children and their parents find it difficult to learn English as a second language, and refugees from troubled homelands often bring emotional burdens. But it needs to be recognised that it may be equally if not more difficult to learn to understand and interpret a new culture. This can be just as true for children born in the country when they are exposed to cultural values at home that differ significantly from those at school.

Salient Features of Individualism and Collectivism compared

Individualism
(Representative of prevailing U.S. culture)

1. Fostering independence and individual achievement
2. Promoting self-expression, individual thinking, personal choice?
3. Associated with egalitarian relationships and flexibility in roles (e.g., upward mobility)
4. Understanding the physical world as knowable apart from its meaning for human life
5. Associated with private property, individual ownership

Collectivism
(Representative of many immigrant cultures)

1. Fostering interdependence and group success
2. Promoting adherence to norms, respect for authority/elders, group consensus
3. Associated with stable, hierarchical roles (dependent on gender, family background, age)?
4. Understanding the physical world in the context of its meaning for human life
5. Associated with shared property, group ownership

Table based on wested.org website report

One of the major concerns of multi-cultural class teachers is to identify the dilemma of children who are conflicted between the expectations of home and those of school. If this dilemma is not properly and constructively addressed, it can result in alienation, either from parents or from school. Solutions need not be difficult, but cannot be attempted unless the situation is identified.

Independence versus helpfulness:

An example could be parents helping their children by tying their shoelaces for them. Teachers might deem this inappropriate because it seems to perpetuate dependence.

Another example has been given ^[2] of mothers accompanying their children to school to help them eat a subsidised school breakfast, and bringing their younger children with them. A condition of the subsidy was that the meals should be provided to the schoolchildren only. This particular school had a large population of immigrant students from a culture that valued sharing as opposed to personal property. Of concern to teachers and administrators also was the belief that the mothers' actions were inhibiting the children's development of independence.

This situation is an example of both the Independence versus Helpfulness syndrome and that of Sharing versus Personal Property, and the mothers had considerable difficulty in understanding the perspective of the school.

A suggested strategy was to have the school explain to the parents why they could not accompany their children to breakfast and, at the same time, finding opportunities to invite whole families to the school to share a meal or other experiences.

Praise versus Criticism

Parents with a strongly collectivistic orientation are likely to be unhappy if they believe their children are being inordinately praised. Praise tends to segregate a child, whereas criticism is perceived as bringing the child in line with the group. Children from relatively collectivistic cultures may be uncomfortable with public praise, as they have grown up believing no one member should be singled out, since doing so tends to diminish the others.

The experience in the US school system is that discomfort with public praise does not automatically fade with age. It can continue through college and university.

A useful strategy is for teachers to praise students in groups or as a whole class, rather than individually in front of others. They can also stress how an individual child's performance contributes to the success of the class. Praise can also be balanced with suggestions for improvement.

Cognitive Skill versus Social Development

Collectivistic parents may regard social or moral development as an essential adjunct of cognitive skill. They may be unable or unprepared to distinguish between the relevance of traditional western schooling as distinct from social development. Japanese education, for example, is based on a belief that there are “a variety of social skills that have to come first before you can focus fruitfully . . . on the intellectual development of the child” (LeVine 1991)^[3] An immigrant to the USA from Latin America expressed the belief that “. . . it would be impossible to get to the university if one doesn’t have good behaviour, if one isn’t taught to respect others” (Goldenberg & Gallimore)^[4].

In discussing a child’s performance in class with a parent, a strategy the teacher could adopt would be to tell the parent how the child interacts in the classroom. After talking about the social skills, the teacher could move on to discussion of the child’s academic performance. Teachers should respond to a parent’s concerns before dealing with individual achievement.

Oral Expression Versus Respect for Authority

Individualistic parents tend to encourage their children to ask questions, to “speak up,” and “tell the teacher what you need.” However, parents from collectivistic backgrounds may be confused or even disturbed by the emphasis placed on self-expression in western societies. They believe a child should be quiet and respectful in order to learn more and not to distract the teacher’s attention nor that of the group from the lesson.

If immigrant students from backgrounds stressing quiet respect are to succeed in school, they need to be coached on how to become active participants in their own learning. The teachers’ strategy will be to discuss with parents why active learning is important for their children but, at the same time, they need to recognise the pressures of individualist standards instilled at home on some students, who should be graded accordingly.

Parents’ Roles versus Teachers’ Roles

It would be wrong for teachers automatically to criticize parents for failing to help their children with their studies at home. There may be “good” cultural reasons for their failure to do so. Some cultures believe it to be wrong for parents to “interfere” in a function that is specifically that of a school, and many may not have had the education themselves to confidently tutor their children. They may, indeed, consider their own function to be that of balancing the teachers’ individualistic and cognitive approach to the child’s education with the domestic social strategies that will teach them respect.

Some schools, recognising the limited education of some parents, have encouraged parents to participate in a number of way in the classroom. This

strategy not only allows them to assist in the children's academic instruction, but may also help the parents to learn alongside their children. In particular with verbal and literacy skills. The presence of parents also introduces norms of respect for adults; at the same time, parents get to see how the teacher manages group discussions and elicits involvement from the students.

Personal Property versus Sharing

Children coming from some collectivist cultures are accustomed to having their possessions shared by other members of the family. This is regarded as the norm and the sanctity of personal property very much the exception. They may therefore find it very strange that, although the school's property such as books and materials, technically belong to the school, children are expected to treat them as if they are private possessions and are responsible for their safety and security. Immigrant parents, in particular, will find this insistence on personal property and lack of encouragement to share more somewhat bewildering.

There is, in fact, no reason why materials cannot be shared, jointly cared for, and stored in a place where all students have access to them. Because students will inevitably have to cope with the reality of private property in this society, however, teachers need to explain this cultural norm. Classroom situations may provide opportunities to discuss which norm is being observed and may also offer examples for discussion with parents. When a contrary expectation prevails (such as the expectation to treat normally shared property as the domain of an individual), children and their parents deserve to know about it. The best strategy may simply be openness.

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Bridging Cultural Differences in Business

Arrived at his first overseas posting the executive asked his local assistant to provide him with a ten minute speech in the local language, so as to impress his hosts at the party being given in his honour.

After the event an angry executive sent for his assistant. "What was the idea of writing a half-hour speech for me?" he yelled. "It was clear I was boring the pants off everyone."

Confused, his assistant replied: "Sir the speech was only ten minutes long. I merely gave you the two extra copies you requested."

Global interdependence continues to increase enormously as does the challenge that confronts organisations in seeking to achieve mutually acceptable and beneficial outcomes in culturally diverse regions. It is essential that leaders of such organisations as well as their staff become educated and oriented to global differences if they are to survive in an increasingly competitive commercial environment.

In the globally expanded business environment of the 21st century, cultural intelligence is required. A culturally intelligent business person is one who

1. Recognises that different cultural groups conduct business and organise themselves in ways that are uniquely their own. This is even more the case when such groups are abroad.
2. Appreciates why this is so.
3. Has the ability to influence people and organisations having different cultures from one's own in ways that are respectful of their cultural codes while being mutually beneficial.
4. Has or acquires at least a second language and a feeling for the cultural attributes of that language.
5. Acknowledges the different degrees of familiarity or deference due to different cultural groups. A business meeting with Americans may be conducted in a fairly easy-going environment; this is unlikely to be the case in a meeting involving, for example, a Japanese team.
6. Is able to distinguish between cultural myths and current realities. This is of importance in respect of both his own culture and that of others.
7. Remains flexible to change in the global business environment, acknowledging that past strengths can be future weaknesses.

"All my wife has ever taken from the Mediterranean - from that whole vast intuitive culture - are four bottles of Chianti to make into lamps."
Peter Shaffer - Equus

What needs to be learned?

The first thing to appreciate is that you are not in a "foreign" culture. YOU are the foreigner. Your own culture is the "foreign" culture. One of the biggest mistakes you can make is to try and do things the way they are done at "home" rather than learning and adopting the methods by which they are done in the country in which you are a guest.

Most cultural misunderstandings result from failure to acknowledge differences in culturally based communication styles. There is no such thing as a universal form of communication. We do not all communicate in the same way; we do not obey the same set of rules; we do not use the same body language styles. Many of the simple gestures we make can be completely misinterpreted by someone from another country. Committing a cross-cultural gaffe may be rewarded with silence or anger and will almost inevitably diminish one's credibility.

Desmond Morris, in a book devoted entirely to the origins and interpretation of gestures, describes how 20 key gestures are capable of completely different meanings in 40 European countries. Undoubtedly they might be even more misunderstood if the sample were extended to the rest of the world. A simple finger tap to the side of the head can mean "Stupid!" in one place and "Brilliant!" in another. The meaning of a gesture towards oneself with fingertips can vary from "Come here" to "Go away"!

A severe risk to understanding is provided by the simple act of pressing together thumb and forefinger. In the United States this means "OK"; in Japan it signifies "money". In Russia it stands for "zero", and in Brazil it's an obscene gesture. There are a number of essential questions to which all people choosing to live or work in a "foreign"* culture would profitably learn the answers.

- How should people of various ranks be addressed?
- When is it acceptable to use first names?
- Should you address others by their official business title?
- How should business cards be exchanged?
- What about gifts?
- What gift is appropriate and when should it be presented?
- How important is punctuality?
- What is the length and time of the appointment?

- If dining is involved, what is appropriate as far as food and beverages?
- What about entertaining—should business be discussed?
- What clothing is appropriate to wear on differing occasions?
- Who picks up the tab?
- Are there specific table manners that need to be observed?
- How does body language differ in this culture?
- When is direct eye contact appropriate?
- What kinds of gender differences in body language need to be respected?

A world survey was conducted by the UN. The only question asked was: "Would you please give your honest opinion about solutions to the food shortage in the rest of the world." The survey was a huge failure...

In Africa they didn't know what "food" meant.

In Eastern Europe they didn't know what "honest" meant.

In Western Europe they didn't know what "shortage" meant.

In China they didn't know what "opinion" meant.

In the Middle East they didn't know what "solution" meant.

In South America they didn't know what "please" meant, and

In the USA they didn't know what "the rest of the world" meant.

Boundaries

What do we mean by boundaries?

Every one of us is involved in boundaries in one form or another, whether this be in our personal or professional lives.

In recent years it has become a buzzword in its application to misconduct, particularly sexual misconduct, between professional therapists and their patients/clients. It represents the limit of what is appropriate behaviour in a professional relationship.

But it applies also to virtually all relationships and inter-relationships. Thus, what are appropriate boundaries between organisations or within organisations? What boundaries should be established between children and their parents? How should boundaries be established and observed between educators and their charges?

Furthermore, what is the most appropriate way to set personal boundaries and/or to reinforce them? How do we maintain boundaries? Whose is the responsibility for maintaining boundaries?

Here are a few observations on boundaries:

- An important condition of boundaries is that we can establish our own; no one can force us to accept their boundaries if we do not choose to do so.
- A boundary need not be regarded as a barrier to keep people out, but a footpath designed to keep them away from areas of danger.
- Perilous areas may be more effectively circumvented by a series of stepping stones with restricted access rather than a bridge available to all and sundry.
- To understand a person's boundaries, it is necessary to understand the person.
- To value a person's boundaries is to value the person.
- We all have boundaries even when they appear to be non-existent.
- The prime function of a boundary is to maintain a neutral position so as to avoid posing a threat to another person's concerns.
- To maintain one's own boundaries while respecting the boundaries of others is the art of negotiation.
- A boundary may be physical or abstract. The one delineates a person's physical space; the other marks the area of the ideas and beliefs that they cherish.
- Infringing either physical or perceptual boundaries can profoundly affect relationships of all kinds.
- Ritual greetings such as shaking hands, kissing on the cheek, or hugging are typical examples of the wide range of physical activities that may be

acceptable to some people at certain times, yet abhorrent to others. At the limit of such contact, for example, might be the level of intimacy permissible to the therapist giving a body massage.

- The abstract boundaries corresponding to these physical boundaries could comprise such behaviour as rudeness, abrasiveness, being judgemental, scorning the other's opinions, and asking inappropriate questions.

Boundaries in personal interaction:

It is convenient to divide boundaries into two types. One is the physical boundary, that is, the boundary that protects our personal space. The other is the emotional boundary, that is, the boundary that protects our sense of emotional security.

Of course there are other ways of describing boundaries. We might suggest, for example that the two types of boundary are those designed to protect ourselves and those intended to be protection for others. The first of these will help define for others the limits of behaviour that is acceptable to us. We need to define, honestly and openly, how others may behave towards us and what forms of behaviour are unacceptable to us. The latter definition is one that is particularly relevant in the area of psychotherapy and counselling.

We cannot set boundaries and establish acceptable limits of behaviour unless we are able to communicate our intentions and our needs to others in an honest and congruent manner. This presupposes that we are honest with ourselves. It also means that we have to admit our own feelings to avoid any risk of blaming, shaming, accusing, or offending others. Therefore it is advantageous to preface any statement describing boundaries with the personal pronoun "I". For example: "I feel threatened when . . . " "I feel angry when . . . " "I feel discounted when . . . " And "I would be happier if . . . "

Boundaries are intended to protect us, to safeguard our dignity, our self-respect, our self-esteem. They correspond to "not acceptable" messages. "It is not acceptable for you to hit me." "It is not acceptable for you to call me names." "It is not acceptable for you to lie to me." Prefacing such statements with the "I feel . . . " message will make them acceptable to the other person. Thus: "I feel unhappy when you call me names"; "I feel diminished when you lie to me."

But it is not enough simply to set boundaries; it is important also to maintain them and, where they are breached, to enforce them. This can be a quite frightening experience requiring a great deal of mental courage, but if we truly respect ourselves, we will find it easier to convince others to respect the boundaries we have established. For example: "If you persist in this behaviour, I will end our relationship."

Of utmost importance is to recognise that setting a boundary is not intended as a threat, or an attempt to control or manipulate, it is merely intended to establish the limits of what we consider to be acceptable in given circumstances. It is a mark of our desire for independence rather than co-dependence. It is - to borrow

a concept from Transactional Analysis^[1] - an acknowledgement that we intend to step outside the “drama triangle”; that we will not accept the role of victim, persecutor or rescuer.

So, in setting our boundaries, we are saying: “This is my territory; this is my space. I accept that you may be unable or unwilling to modify your own behaviour, but this is the limit of what I find acceptable and I reserve the right to choose what action I am prepared to take to withdraw from a relationship that does not respect my boundaries.”

Setting boundaries with others is, therefore, communication. It is negotiation. It is formulating desired outcomes and then dovetailing them so that we each get what we want without infringing the autonomy of the other person.

Boundaries in the group context:

The dynamics of groups will inevitably have some effect on the nature of the boundaries that are imposed internally as well as those with which they interact with the outside world.

Internally boundaries will be addressed to such concerns as:

- *Physical space and time span.* The area to be occupied as well as the permitted physical interaction between members has to be established. The time fixed for meetings as well as the total time frame for which the group has been formed must be agreed.
- *Task boundary and input boundary.* The limits of what members are required to contribute has to be clearly defined.
- *Punctuality and commitment.* The failure of any group members to arrive on time to group meetings or regularly to absent themselves from such meetings will constitute a threat to the feeling of safety of the rest of the group. Regular unpunctuality may be regarded as a sign that the “culprit” lacks commitment to the group.
- *Consideration for others.* No infringement of the personal boundaries of individual group members should be permitted. Respect for individual boundaries will encourage respect for group boundaries.
- *Permissibility or prohibition of substances such as drugs, alcohol, tobacco, food, etc.* It is common for all such substances to be banned within the physical space and time span of group sessions.
- *Relationships between group members.* This can be a tricky obstacle to navigate in terms of overall group safety. Some groups will not permit any relationship between members outside group sessions, unless such a relationship pre-existed. Others will carefully monitor such relationships to ensure they do not impinge on the harmony of the group and the welfare of individual members.
- *Relationships between group members and group facilitator.*

Boundaries have to be clear and unambiguous from the start. There will often be a tendency for some group members to impose their wills on the facilitator. Procedures have to be established for dealing with such breaches.

External boundaries will be occupied with:

- *Meetings and discussions outside the group.* As a general rule nothing that has been discussed within group sessions should be referred to outside the group meeting between group members and under no circumstances with other than group members. If any such discussion takes place, this is an infringement of a fundamental boundary, and - in such an event - it is important that the discussion or meeting be reported back to the group at the earliest opportunity.
- *Sanctity of the group identity.* There is an obligation on the part of group members to respect group boundaries and group identity whenever the subject of the group crops up externally.
- *Additional admittance to the group; departures from the group.* Any newcomer admitted to the group subsequent to the group's foundation, and any group member leaving the group, will have an effect on group identity. In some cases this can be traumatic for group members. No new members should be permitted unless this is discussed and approved by the entire group. Any group members leaving the group should respect group identity by providing an honest and sincere explanation for their departure.

These are not rules. they are boundaries established for the harmony, welfare, and mental security of group members. Groups, and particularly therapy groups, are safe spaces for their members, where the conventions of social engagement may be relaxed, so that members can let down their guards without losing the sense of safety that has developed over the period of the group's existence.

The boundaries have to be specific and firm, but permeable enough to allow for an adequate flow of communication. They have to clarify group expectations. They will create and maintain a balance between the independence of each group member and the commitment of each to the well-being of the whole.

Boundaries for children:

It is important to instill the idea of boundaries into children from the earliest ages. They will inevitably get conflicting messages from authority figures, peers, and media, but they have to be introduced to a set of clear and respectful rules and limits that will enable them to acknowledge the rights of others while establishing rights of their own.

It is essential to recognise that young children do not intentionally violate standards and infringe boundaries. If they have been inadequately explained or grasped they must not be blamed. But every unintentional violation is an excellent opportunity to explain and reinforce lessons. Boundaries need to be drawn in simple, direct and specific terms and must be enforced consistently to avoid confusion.

Modelling behaviour is a more valuable way of teaching than simply telling them what to do or what not to do.

Boundaries that are established for the physical safety and security of children are non-negotiable and must be firmly maintained. Boundaries that are respectful of others, however, may be re-negotiated as children grow older and can appreciate the limits of flexibility.

Boundaries in therapy:

Boundaries in therapy are specifically designed to prevent unethical behaviour between therapist and patient. This concern applies equally in the areas of psychotherapy, medicine, and social work. The boundaries are intended to remove any hindrance to the patient's potential for healthful therapy and also to protect therapists from involvement that, at one level, will reduce their capacity to heal and, on another level, might bring them into breach of their ethical obligations or even the law.

An important pre-requisite to an initial contract between therapist and patient, therefore, should be a clear and unambiguous description of the rules to be followed in therapy sessions. These might include:

- No violence to self or the other during a session
- No physical violence to or with objects in the therapy room
- No participation in a therapy session while under the influence of any non-prescribed drug or alcohol
- What fees are to be paid and when they are to be paid
- How many sessions will be held initially
- What scope will there be for further sessions
- What provision will be made for evaluation at the end of a session

A major difficulty in imposing and maintaining boundaries is that much therapy largely depends on a degree of intimacy if it is to be effective. A distinction has to be made between boundary violations which may cause harm and boundary relaxations that may be helpful.

This has been put very clearly by Dr Glen O. Gabbard ^[2]:

“While it is ordinarily inappropriate for a therapist to hug a patient, for example, it may be entirely correct to do so when a sobbing patient who has just lost a child reaches out to the therapist. This example illustrates the distinction between a boundary violation and a boundary crossing. A violation is a serious breach that causes harm, while a crossing is a necessary breach that may actually be helpful”.

The analogy with stepping stones mentioned earlier would seem appropriate in this connection. Perhaps even more apposite would be an analogy with tightrope walking.

Some examples of boundary violations would include:

- Hugging or excessive physical contact.
- Therapy sessions in intimate surroundings rather than in the therapist's office.
- Failing to maintain strict time-keeping.
- Failing to make an appropriate charge for the therapy being provided.
- Failing to maintain confidentiality.
- Digression from the treatment into areas that are more the concern of the therapist than the patient.

Patients need to feel that their concerns are being properly and adequately addressed. Therapists need to feel that patients are not making inappropriate demands on them.

If, as a patient, you feel uncomfortable with some aspect of a therapist's treatment or behaviour, it is recommended that the situation be explored before it persists for too long. Ideally you would raise your concerns with the therapist, but this can be daunting to a patient. Describing your concerns to a third party, be it a family member, a friend, or another therapist, can be useful.

It is, however, perfectly normal under many circumstances to find work in therapy unsettling. It is also far from rare for a therapist's behaviour to be deliberately aimed at disturbing the equilibrium of a patient. Issues frequently arise in therapeutic treatment and in counselling that produce anxiety, unhappiness, or even fear. Some of these feelings may even be directed at the therapist. It can be a useful part of the treatment to discuss these feelings openly with the therapist or counsellor. It should not be dismissed, therefore, as exceeding permitted boundaries. But a healthy, safe and supportive relationship between patient and therapist would invite a discussion about these feelings.

The intimate nature of the therapeutic relationship often creates a vulnerable situation for clients, one that could be open to abuse. The codes of ethics of the various professional bodies in the area of psychotherapy and counselling are designed to protect clients and incorporate many of the "rules" proposed above. Unfortunately a number of practising counsellors or therapists have no professional qualifications and sometimes very limited training.

References:

^[1] Developing Transactional Analysis Counselling by Ian Stewart, Sage, 1996. Pages 38 ff.

^[2] Article in The Menninger Letter, Vol. 3, No. 4 (April 1995), pp. 1-2. (The Menninger Clinic is located in Houston, Texas.)

Going to Hell in a Hand Basket^[1]

(Let's build bridges, not walls)

I doubt if there are people anywhere who would fail to claim that they sincerely desire to live in peace and harmony with their neighbours. The main obstacle to be overcome in achieving that desire is inevitably differences in cultural beliefs and values, of which they may be objectively unaware. No matter how reasonably they may claim to be behaving, their unconscious “cultural baggage” will be influencing their perceptions, their reactions and, ultimately, their behaviour. This lack of awareness itself is a barrier to harmonious intercultural relationships.

A second, though not secondary, obstacle is that of fear and the perceived or real threat to their right to survive. In many cases this will be based on historical reality; in other cases on historical legend and myth. Neither reality nor myth is likely to make any difference to patterns of behaviour.

The most recent examples of this behaviour include Kosovo, Bosnia, Afghanistan, Iraq and Israel, and it is the Israeli situation that I will address in this article, and specifically the rationale behind the building of the wall dividing Israel from Palestine.

Noam Chomsky, in an article published in the New York Times[2], states: “It is a virtual reflex for governments to plead security concerns when they undertake any controversial action, often as a pretext for something else. Careful scrutiny is always in order.” So what do we discover when we scrutinise the reasons given for the construction of this fence (as the Israelis prefer to describe it) or wall (as it is usually called by the Arab media)? Firstly, if the aim is really to ensure security and to protect Israeli citizens as far as possible from terrorist attacks, one has to ask why it was decided (and by whom) to construct the wall so far inside the Palestinian sector of the Green Line established after the end of the 1948-49 War as to claim “some of the most fertile lands of the West Bank”.^[2]

The UN Resolution of 1947 allocated 45 per cent of British Mandate Palestine to a Palestinian State. In 1948 Israel occupied 78 per cent of the land, leaving just 22 per cent - the West Bank and Gaza - to the Palestinians. Since when Israel has continuously encroached on what was left. The Wall is the latest example. It will be 8m high and between 600km and 1000km long.^[3] In places it will extend eastwards up to 20km beyond the Green Line boundary. [Historical and statistical data provided by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) will be found in “Links” below]

“Even before construction of the barrier was under way, the United Nations estimated that Israeli barriers, infrastructure projects and settlements had created 50 disconnected Palestinian pockets in the West Bank. As the design of the wall

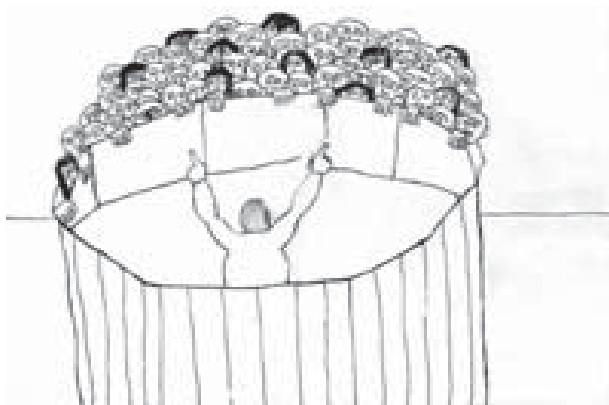
was coming into view, the World Bank estimated that it might isolate 250,000 to 300,000 Palestinians, more than 10 percent of the population, and that it might effectively annex up to 10 percent of West Bank land. And when the government of Ariel Sharon finally published its proposed map, it became clear the the wall would cut the West Bank into 16 isolated enclaves, confined to just 42 percent of the West Bank land that Mr. Sharon had previously said could be ceded to a Palestinian state.”^[2]

No one with a grain of humanity can fail to be appalled at the deaths caused by Arab suicide bombers. No one with an ounce of respect for the sanctity of human life can blame Israelis for wanting to ensure their security. But building a barrier is not the answer when it is used as a cynical opportunity to annex more land, more water, to dispossess more Palestinians, and to create a Palestine that is simply not viable. This is not to ensure security; it is to guarantee that bitterness and the thirst for revenge will be perpetuated for further decades.

It is clear from the Israeli media that a majority of the country’s Jewish population is against this blatant and cynical annexation of Palestinian land. Unfortunately they are not the people in power, and much as they might want to build a bridge between both sides of the Green Line, it is almost certainly too late for that to be done. In the meantime the bricks, the mortar and the barbed wire continues to be put in place.

Ninety years ago the American poet Robert Frost wrote a poem entitled Mending Wall.

*Before I built a wall I'd ask to know
What I was walling in or walling out,
And to whom I was like to give offense.
Something there is that doesn't love a wall.*



“This was meant to be a wall not a cage!” ^[4]

Good fences make good neighbours, the old adage has it, and this sentiment is repeated by Frost, somewhat tongue-in-cheek. By the same token, bad fences make bad enemies.

I end with a final quotation from Chomsky. You may believe him or not, but to my mind what is important is not how factual the statement is, but the mere fact that he could make it:

“It is misleading to call these Israeli policies. They are American-Israeli policies — made possible by unremitting United States military, economic and diplomatic support of Israel. This has been true since 1971 when, with American support, Israel rejected a full peace offer from Egypt, preferring expansion to security. In 1976, the United States vetoed a Security Council resolution calling for a two-state settlement in accord with an overwhelming international consensus. The two-state proposal has the support of a majority of Americans today, and could be enacted immediately if Washington wanted to do so.”^[2]

^[1] Opinions are divided on the origin of this expression. One definition from a website devoted to idioms suggests: that it dates from the early 1940s and means “going to seed, or going bad without effort”. Eric Partridge, however, in his “Dictionary of Catch Phrases,” dates the term to the early 1920’s. Since hand baskets are “light and easily conveyed,” the term “means going to hell easily and rapidly.” That makes it particularly appropriate, I feel, in the context of this article, since it implies a devastation that is swift and sure.

^[2] A Wall as a Weapon, Noam Chomsky, New York Times, February 23, 2004.

^[3] The Berlin Wall, by comparison, was a mere 155km long and 3.5m high.

^[4] Adapted from illustration by Yaron Livay in *Peace of Mind is a Piece of Cake*.

[Crown House]

The Stockholm Syndrome

“Men, when they receive good from whence they expected evil, feel the more indebted to their benefactor” - Machiavelli

What is the Stockholm syndrome?

The Stockholm syndrome is a psychological state in which the victims of a kidnapping, or persons detained against their free will, develop an emotional attachment, a bond of interdependence with their captors. This is enhanced when the captive is placed in a life-threatening situation and is then spared. The relief that results from the removal of the threat generates intense feelings of gratitude which, combined with the fear, makes the victim reluctant subsequently to cooperate with those seeking to prosecute the oppressor.

The defining characteristic of Stockholm syndrome is the tendency to react to threatening circumstances not with the usual fight-or-flight response, but by “freezing,” as some animals do by playing dead in order to fool predators. Stockholm syndrome is a position of passivity and acquiescence that works in a similar way as a strategy for survival.

This situation was summed up well by one of the hostages of the TWA Flight 847 hi-jack in June 1985: “They weren’t bad people. They let me eat, they let me sleep, they gave me my life.”

How did the expression Stockholm Syndrome originate?

In August 1973, a 32 year old named Jan-Erik Olsson, having escaped from prison, attempted to rob a Stockholm bank. His attempt went awry and, in the best Hollywood tradition, he held four employees hostage in a vault for six days. Despite Olsson’s threats to kill them, the four bank workers bonded so thoroughly with him that they refused to denounce him and, indeed, criticized their rescuers.

What other situations does this syndrome cover?

(1) BATTERING

It is now accepted that there are a number of situations where people, held in thrall by forces they feel helpless to resist, seek to appease those forces and work with them. This is no more than a basic survival instinct. It applies, for example, to “battered women” who display a strange need to be loyal to their husbands or partners and often resist appeals to escape or take other defensive action.

Both hostages and battered women share psychological and emotional responses to their victimizers. Hostages are overwhelmingly grateful to their captors for giving them life; battered women are inordinately grateful to their abusers for giving them love. Each focuses on the victimizer’s kindnesses not their acts of

brutality. Both feel fear, as well as love, compassion and empathy toward someone who has shown them any kindness. Such acts of kindness help to ease the emotional distress that has been created and sets the stage for emotional dependency. Battered women may assume that the abuser is a good man whose actions stem from problems that she can help him solve.

Women Against Domestic Violence (WADV) states that: “battering is a pattern of behavior used to establish power and control over another person through fear and intimidation, often including the threat or use of violence. Battering happens when one person believes they are entitled to control another. Assault, battering and domestic violence are crimes.

“Battering may include emotional abuse, economic abuse, sexual abuse, using children, threats, using male privilege, intimidation, isolation, and a variety of other behaviors used to maintain fear, intimidation and power. In all cultures, the perpetrators are most commonly the men of the family. Women are most commonly the victims of violence. Elder and child abuse are also prevalent.

“Acts of domestic violence generally fall into one or more of the following categories:

“Physical Battering - The abuser’s physical attacks or aggressive behavior can range from bruising to murder. It often begins with what is excused as trivial contacts which escalate into more frequent and serious attacks. Sexual Abuse - Physical attack by the abuser is often accompanied by, or culminates in, sexual violence wherein the woman is forced to have sexual intercourse with her abuser or take part in unwanted sexual activity.

“Psychological Battering -The abuser’s psychological or mental violence can include constant verbal abuse, harassment, excessive possessiveness, isolating the woman from friends and family, deprivation of physical and economic resources, and destruction of personal property. Battering escalates. It often begins with behaviors like threats, name calling, violence in her presence (such as punching a fist through a wall), and/or damage to objects or pets. It may escalate to restraining, pushing, slapping, and/or pinching. The battering may include punching, kicking, biting, sexual assault, tripping, throwing. Finally, it may become life-threatening with serious behaviors such as choking, breaking bones, or the use of weapons.”

(2) KIDNAPPING

(a) Patty Hearst

Patricia (Patty) Hearst was a millionaire’s daughter, granddaughter of the American publishing baron William Randolph Hearst, who was kidnapped and tortured by a group called the Symbionese Liberation Army (SLA).

In February 1974 she was abducted from her Berkeley, California apartment and extortionate demands from the SLA led to donations by the Hearst family of

six million dollars-worth of food to the poor of the San Francisco Bay Area. But of, or from, Miss Hearst there was no word.

In April 1974, however, she was photographed wielding an assault rifle during the course of a robbery of the Sunset branch of the Hibernia Bank.

Later communications from her revealed that she had changed her name to Tania and was committed to the goals of the SLA. A warrant was issued for her arrest and in September 1975 she was arrested in an apartment with other SLA members.

At her trial, which started in 1976, Hearst claimed she had been locked blindfolded in a closet and physically and sexually abused, which caused her to become a convert to the SLA. A clear analogy exists here between the case of Patty Hearst and the bonding that had occurred in the Stockholm bank incident of two years earlier, albeit that this was a rather more extreme example of the syndrome.

(b) Elizabeth Smart

Elizabeth Ann Smart was kidnapped in June 2002 from her home in Salt Lake City, Utah. She was five months short of her 15th birthday.

Nine months after her abduction Elizabeth was found with two homeless adults, Brian David Mitchell and his wife, Wanda Barzee, in Sandy, Utah, when they were stopped by police. At that time she refused to reveal her true identity, nor had she earlier run for help when the opportunity had been available to her. Mitchell had earlier done handyman work at the Smart house.

The case inevitably provoked comparison with Patty Hearst and evoked references to the Stockholm syndrome, although the generally expressed opinion of her family and friends was that she must have been brainwashed by her captors.

Mitchell's lawyer has told a television station that his client considers the 15-year-old his wife and "still loves her". He added that he did not consider Elizabeth's disappearance a kidnapping, but a "call from God."

"He wanted me to tell the world that she is his wife, and he still loves her and knows that she still loves him, that no harm came to her during their relationship and the adventure that went on,"

Mitchell, an excommunicated Mormon and self-style prophet, wrote a rambling manifesto last year espousing the virtues of polygamy. The Mormon church has long distanced itself from polygamy and excommunicates those who practice it. His lawyer suggested that giving a light sentence to his client could send a signal to kidnappers that they should keep their captives alive.

"As a doctor, it's amazing to me that you can become so brainwashed that you identify with your captor," grandfather Charles Smart said. During her time with her abductors, "Elizabeth had the chance of escaping. One day she was completely by herself, but she didn't try to run away," he added. He did not elaborate on circumstances in which the girl was left alone.

(3) SLAVERY AND BONDAGE

It applies also to the reluctance or refusal to escape from political or economic bondage. In the area of racial, ethnic or geographical slavery, the oppressed usually appear blind to the reality of their enslavement after long periods (sometimes generations) of subjugation to political and economic forces. They may complain or agitate, but seem strangely incapable of comprehending the precise nature of their situation in order to escape.

Slavery, it has been said, has been the fate of almost everyone during the whole history of human political activity. If you think that you are not caught up in some form of slavery (in particular, slavery to implanted beliefs) then you are either captivated and blinded by your situation and the deceit of your oppressors, or you have had a life of miraculous good luck. If the latter then you must feel quite lonely and frustrated at not being able to convey the truth of their situation to others.”

This may be a time to recall the wisdom of Thomas Szasz:

“Every act of conscious learning requires the willingness to suffer an injury to one’s self-esteem. That is why young children, before they are aware of their own self-importance, learn so easily; and why older persons, especially if vain or important, cannot learn at all.

“It is so difficult to face the sacrifice of ideas to which we have adapted our lives. But it may become possible, even easy, if we understand that it is our human ability to self-sacrifice that creates the food of wisdom and a healthy mind. Self-sacrifice (of belief to better information) is the fuel of our intellectual progress.”

It could be postulated that the willingness of many people to accept the abuse of goods and service providers is merely a variant on the Stockholm syndrome, akin to that of battered wives. In order to justify bad choices, people will often rationalize and defend their decisions. Mobile telephone companies, TV satellite suppliers, internet service providers . . . no matter how much we may complain directly to them, we tend to defend them when speaking to others. To denounce them would be to admit to our own insufficiency.

Here’s an interesting variation on the theme.

Dr. Helen Smith, in her TCS essay on the book by David Frum and Richard Perle, *An End to Evil*: (Random House, 2004) writes:

“ . . . some Americans seem to believe that if we can “feel our enemies’ pain,” then we will be on the path to enlightenment and peace. This belief could not be further from the truth. In my private practice, I don’t work with terrorists but I do work with violent people. I used to believe (as many of my colleagues still do) that empathizing with my patients and increasing their self-esteem would help them on the path to self-actualization.

“Of course, for some anxiety-ridden patients who need faith in themselves, the technique of empathy and support works. However, for those patients with serious violent tendencies, just the opposite is true. With those patients, I’ve found that setting clear boundaries and making judgments about their immoral behavior works like a charm.

“Those patients who threatened me backed down only when I got up in their face and told them forcefully to stop — the slightest hint of fear or intimidation (or sympathy!) on my part was met with increased threats. In the real world of private practice, confronting real murderers, I learned to act in ways that were different from what I had been taught in graduate school.

“Unfortunately, there are still those in the ivory tower who have not learned this valuable lesson. They continue to believe that to humanize and to empathize with violent students, professors, and terrorists is the only way to treat those who wish to do them harm. In fact, however, the old saw “give them an inch and they’ll take a mile” applies. Without clear boundaries, and a sense of consequences, their behavior will spiral out of control until they injure themselves and others.”

“In our attempt to be overly-tolerant and empathetic, we start to identify too much with the enemy (very much like those suffering from Stockholm syndrome) and start to dehumanize the victims of terror.”

Reprise

Thomas Strentz spend 20 years as a Supervisory Special Agent with the FBI’s Behavioral Science Unit. He was a former marine, an expert in hostage situations, negotiation and survival, and stress management in correctional environments. Also, as a crime scene assessor and profiler, he conducted worldwide research for the FBI on terrorist activities, and was responsible for much of the original research on the Stockholm syndrome.

In 1980 he commented that “the victim’s need to survive is stronger than his impulse to hat the person who has created his dilemma.” The victim comes to see the captor as a “good guy”, even a saviour. This situation occurs in response to four specific conditions:

1. A person threatens to kill another and is perceived as having the capability to do so.
2. The other cannot escape, so her or his life depends on the threatening person.
3. The threatened person is isolated from outsiders to that the only other perspective available to him or her is that of the threatening person.
4. The threatening person is perceived as showing some degree of kindness to the one being threatened. For example, battered women assume that the abuser is a good man whose actions stem from problems that she can help him solve. Hostages are overwhelmingly grateful to terrorists for permitting them to live; they focus on the captors’ kindnesses, not their acts of brutality.

BUSINESS PRACTICES

Business Practices

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Oh what a tangled web we weave
When first we practise to deceive
But given just a bit more time
Deceit could really be sublime.

Advice that is free is overpriced

Expert! Expert! Who's the expert?

“Consider the vice-president, George Bush, a man so bedevilled by bladder problems that he managed, for the last eight years, to be in the men’s room whenever an important illegal decision was made.”

Barbara Ehrenreich, *The Worst Years of our Lives*, 1991.

Decisions made by experts (even *soi-disant* experts) should, by definition, be more effective than those made by people who do not profess to be experts, if only because an expert decision may be expected to be backed up by expert judgement.

In studies on the effectiveness of expert decisions, however, it has been revealed that experts may be neither more nor less competent than tyros under similar circumstances. The principal criterion seems to be whether the decisions involve evaluation of areas which are changeable or relatively constant. Thus expert judgements based on objects are more likely to be effective than those based on people.

In other words the predictable is more likely to benefit from an expert opinion than the arbitrary. Nevertheless the popular perception of experts will often permit errors on the part of self-styled scientists rather than those whose area of competence takes them into the domain of unreliable human behaviour patterns. For example, a weather forecaster may be forgiven his errors (Michael Fish, take a bow!) where a clinical psychologist - much less a psychotherapist - would be unlikely to receive such tolerant deference.

Let us put this into the context of decision-making.

Making a decision is making a choice; and it is hard to think of a single therapy, guide to personal development, treatise on philosophy, course on business management, self-help group, or spiritual growth system which does not emphasise the exercise of choice.

New Age theorists and their successors might return to the bible and find much of their “innovative” theory was anticipated. More recent treatments of “empowerment” have followed the same path and pattern. Samuel Smiles (Self Help), Coué (“every day and in every way . . .”), Norman Vincent Peale (Positive Thinking), Dale Carnegie (Influencing People), Jean Paul Sartre (“existence precedes essence”): all of them place the making of decisions squarely into the hands of the decision maker.

You want to make a decision? The choice is yours. Too often we spend our time, before making decisions, looking for guidance outside ourselves, rather than within ourselves. We have a choice; we are responsible. If we accept this from the outset, much of the rest will follow. The first basic decision we have to make is: do I want to accept responsibility or do I fear to accept responsibility? This

amounts to merely: Do I trust myself? Do I value myself? Or do I want to put myself down?

Making decisions provides us with an opportunity, a challenge. We can use the opportunity to provoke a sense of adventure. Or we can put it off. We can procrastinate. We can hesitate. We can run away. We can hope that, whatever it is that we believe needs to be done, it will be done without our intervention in the course of time; or that the need itself will disappear. This is fine if we have made a conscious decision not to make a decision! If we have exercised a conscious and deliberate preference. If we have acted through choice and not through fear.

Or we could simply join George Bush (the elder!) in the men's room. If he is still there.

Carl Rogers (*Client Centred Therapy*) makes the point that the question of group members' ability to make sound decisions versus the group leader's ability, is really a question of whether the leader without the group members can make better decisions than the total group including the leader.

It is important to understand that there is absolutely no facet of our conditions or environment that cannot be changed by making a decision. And it is the commitment to making a decision which effectively guarantees the success of the decision that has been made. This is the first step. Anthony Robbins (*Awaken the Giant Within*) suggests six steps:

- To recognise the power of making decisions.
- To acknowledge the importance of making a true commitment.
- To make decisions often.
- To learn from the decisions.
- To stay committed to the decisions, but flexible.
- To enjoy making decisions.





Having established how to proactively embrace the decision-making process, how do we turn this into effective decision-making?

- By being systematic.
- By avoiding procrastination.
- By setting clear objectives.
- By collecting all relevant information.
- By reviewing alternatives.

BY MAKING THE DECISION.

- By devising and implementing an action plan.
- By reviewing the outcome.

Now assess your decision-making performance

Never	Occasionally	Frequently	Always
			
Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Score 4

1. I make my decisions in good time and ensure they are implemented.
2. I analyse situations carefully and fully before making up my mind.
3. I delegate all decisions that do not need to be taken personally by me.
4. I add intuitive belief to intellectual reasoning when making a decision.
5. I use my understanding of corporate culture to get support for my decisions.
6. I draw up a strong case to clarify and support any strategic decisions.
7. I seek the widest possible involvement in the decision-making process.
8. I consult all those I consider appropriate to help me to reach the right decision.
9. I challenge all obsolete ideas in order to achieve a creative approach.
10. I encourage group members to think as a team not as prejudiced individuals.
11. I weigh alternatives against objective criteria that must satisfy the decision.
12. I use all available information sources both inside and outside the group.
13. I seek to minimise risks but will take unavoidable ones with confidence.
14. I take decisions on their merits and without concern for my personal position.
15. I invite support and feedback for my decisions at every stage of the process.
16. I entrust each stage of any action plan to an accountable individual.
17. I involve the entire team before implementing the decision.
18. I communicate my decisions openly, honestly, and as quickly as possible.
19. I encourage people to come forward with any objections.
20. I take full responsibility for the performance of people I decide to employ.

The maximum number of points you can score is 80. Any score between 60 and 80 is evidence that you have very strong decision-making skills. It also suggests that you may be too complacent. Improvement is always possible. 40 to 60 points reveal a fairly sound decision-making ability, with room for improvement. If you have scored below 40 points, your decision-making performance is poor. Examine particularly the areas where you have scored badly and try to adopt new methods and strategies.

Nurturing Your Business Potential

Thomas Gray put it so well . . . *

Full many a gem of purest ray serene
The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear;
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

Some village-Hampden that with dauntless breast
The little tyrant of the fields withstood;
Some mute inglorious Milton may have rest,
Some Cromwell guiltless of his country's blood.

We all have unused potential, as Thomas Gray perceived. We simply don't always recognise it. We know what we've done; we may suspect what we can do; but on the whole we remain in the dark about all the things we could do.

So how do we discover our dormant potential and then begin to nurture it? We have a number of options, of possibilities, of choices. Unless we take advantage of the possibilities, unless we open our horizon up to the options, and unless we are prepared to risk the choices, we will simply restrict ourselves to the familiar.

George Santayana told the world that if it failed to learn the lessons of history, it would be compelled to repeat them. And it did, unhappily And it does, dismayingly. By the same (or perhaps the reverse?) token, unless we pursue the unknown, unless we try to push our personal frontiers outward, we will simply repeat our past performance.

There are a number of relatively simple steps we can take to distinguish our true potential. Here are some questions we might ask ourselves.

- What do I really want? Am I satisfied with what I am currently doing? Is there something I would rather do? How might I determine what it is?
- If I think about doing something new in some unexplored territory, does it feel exciting? Fearful? Stimulating? Or am I aware of an overpowering tendency to thrust it to one side in favour of the familiar, the comfortable pattern?
- Am I able to recognise my strengths? Am I developing them, or am I putting them into a straitjacket?
- Do I already possess the knowledge and resources (emotional, physical, mental, intellectual) to pursue the new course? Or will I have to acquire new

knowledge, learn new skills, accept new beliefs?

- Am I aware, or ready to accept, that unless I am prepared to learn new skills or acquire new knowledge, I am unlikely to develop my true potential?

- Am I likely to sabotage my own efforts to develop my potential? If I can distinguish this tendency, what might I do about it?

Having established that I am aware of my potential and am prepared to explore how best to utilise it in a business capacity, what might I do next?

- Recognise that the first idea is not necessarily the only one or even the best, but work out alternative marketing strategies.

- Ensure that my strategies are correctly designed to produce the desired end result. Devise tests to check this out.

- Establish a USP – a unique selling proposition.

- Think of ways of making the idea foolproof. This will involve not merely considering clients needs, their possible objections, and their probable desired outcomes, but also one's own propensity to self-sabotage.

- Develop a routine that will reinforce the positive energy with which the idea was first greeted.

- Involve others and invite their cooperation.

- Maintain an environment for exploration and continued learning.

Above all, do not be content with your initial achievement. Potential is not finite; that would be a contradiction in terms. So continue to seek out ways in which your horizon may be expanded. Fathom those dark caves and bring your personal flower to its full ripeness and sweetness.

* *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*



The S-Word

Survival, Sanity or Simply Success

I had a successful business career.

At least, looking back over the 50 years from graduation to retirement, I suspect that many people would regard my career as successful.

For myself, I find it difficult to think in terms of success or failure when considering my working life. The “S” words stands not only for “success” but also for “survival” – and I did a great deal more than merely survive. I enjoyed my working life. And if I never actually scaled the heights of other people’s ambitions, I certainly got as high as I wanted while avoiding the headaches and heartaches and peptic ulcers so often associated with top management.

Pathetically, such is the irony of business-people’s belief systems, few of my colleagues could accept that I had no aspirations that involved “getting my boss’s job”. So I was never entirely trusted by my superiors nor by those on my own executive level. And I suspect that I was admired by many of my subordinates for precisely the wrong reason - the suspicion that my insouciant attitude with top management was part of a craftily ambitious agenda.

Almost half a century ago I acquired a book by Mark Caine entitled *The S Man*, and sub-titled *A Grammar of Success*. The book itself, I recall, enjoyed a brief *succès d’estime* on office bookshelves.^[1] It purported to describe a pattern of behaviour attainable by “everyman” that would guarantee success. Not simply in business, but in every area of life - although memory suggests that it appealed mainly to the business community. It had a lot of good commonsense.

The one statement that impressed me most was the injunction not to be a slave of your environment but recognise that you have the option to move away if your world is uncomfortable from your existing perspective. It was advice I took time and again in my business career. It was advice, too, that I modified by recognising that moving away from a position of comfort, even though it might bring rewards of greater wealth or prestige, would make me a slave of my business environment and I would be happier to stay where I was. Or, perhaps, organise a move horizontally rather than vertically. This was, you may be interested to note, ten years before Dr. Laurence J. Peter introduced us to his famous Principle.

**In a Hierarchy Every Employee Tends to Rise
to His Level of Incompetence**

I recall, too, some of Caine’s amusing caveats. When describing the S-Man’s acquisition of charm and manners, he warned against becoming a head waiter; when describing the acquisition of geniality, he warned against become a public

relations person; when describing success at physical pursuits, he counselled against becoming a gymnast. Unless, of course, these were your genuine ambitions.

But what if you were actually after your boss's job? What if you thought "to hell with the Peter Principle"? How could you best go about it? You might, for instance, follow the path suggested by Machiavelli to "always follow in the path trodden by great men and imitate those who are most excellent". A piece of advice, incidentally, echoed in recent years by another business guru: Tom Peters' *In Search of Excellence*.

Actually it should be a lot easier to fill your boss's shoes than most lower-level executives imagine. We only have to consider the mediocrity of so many "captains of industry" to recognise that the business world habitually cries out for fresh blood and new talent. The problem usually is that the person waiting in the wings, the potential successor, is likely to be even more of a mediocrity.

If you seek the success of a step up the executive ladder, you need to ask yourself a few questions. Do you think you will be happier doing a higher level job? Is it the money or prestige that attracts you, or is it because you really think you can do a better job than your predecessor? Would you be more likely to improve your situation by moving to a completely different company?

Take a look at advice given by and of some people who really did make it to the top of their professions.

Henry Ford: "The question 'Who ought to be boss' is like asking
'Who ought to be the tenor in the quartet?'
Obviously the man who can sing tenor.

Bernard Shaw said: "Take care to get what you like
or you will be forced to like what you get."

Peter Drucker: "Promotion is not an end in itself.
Rather is it a beginning."

Henry Kaiser said: "I make progress by having people around me
who are smarter than I am - and listening to them. And I assume that
everyone is smarter about something than I am."

This was said in other words by Machiavelli:
"The first impression that one gets of a ruler and of his
brains is from seeing the men he has about him."

Andrew Carnegie: "The true road to pre-eminent success
in any line is to make yourself master of that line."

So, before you take that first ambitious step towards a career move that may bring you more grief than satisfaction, make sure you really want it. Examine your motivation. Think about the possible consequences. Consider what you may have to give up and what you will get in exchange . . . and decide whether it is a fair exchange.

Remember the Rudyard Kipling verse:

*I had six honest serving men;
They taught me all I knew -
Their names were Where and What and When
And Why and How and Who.*

^[1] A search on the Internet reveals that The S Man is still available and quotes from Mark Caine's writings are widespread on the WWW. Here are some of them:

- Meticulous planning will enable everything a man does to appear spontaneous.
 - The first step toward success is taken when you refuse to be a captive of the environment in which you first find yourself.
 - The successful man doesn't use others, other people use the successful man, for above all the Success is of service.
 - There is nothing that puts a man more in your debt than that he owes you nothing.
 - There is nothing wrong in using people. The Success never uses people except to their advantage.
 - You cannot live on other people's promises, but if you promise others enough, you can live on your own.
-

Surviving a Recession

[and maybe even prospering]

In good times, from a business perspective - in other words when business is buoyant and the orders are coming in without too much prompting and being filled with relatively little hassle - there seems to be no point in looking beyond the bottom line of the balance sheet.

But let a recession strike, let orders drop, let prices become subject to downward pressure from clients, and suddenly gloom is in the air and accusation's finger starts to point – usually downwards from top management.

This is stating the obvious, isn't it? But sometimes the obvious is only obvious with 20/20 hindsight.

To make the obvious even more obvious, therefore, the best way to survive a recession is to anticipate a recession and take precautionary measures even though they seem to be unnecessary. You need a game plan. You need to draw up strategies for survival.

What are the three main ingredients of such a game plan?

1. Added Value. Your clients must believe that they are getting at least what they are paying for – be it goods or services – and probably more than is being offered by your competitors.
2. Added Value. Your clients must believe that your product or service is unique; it has features that other suppliers simply cannot provide.
3. Added Value. Your clients must trust and respect you. They must believe that they enjoy a special relationship with you that is unrivalled elsewhere.

I did say I would be stating the obvious, didn't I? We all believe that those three ingredients are an essential part of a successful business. The trouble is that too few companies are concerned with them in boom times. But come the downturn and personnel start running around like headless chickens.

The time to produce your game plan – your strategies for survival – is precisely when you do not feel you need it. One of the major contributors to the economic cycle of boom and bust in the stock market is the state of mind of investors. When they are feeling optimistic they cannot imagine the FT or Dow Jones indices doing anything but move heavenwards. Let the index drop a few points, let a natural catastrophe occur, or the threat of war appear in some godforsaken area of the world, the optimism can vanish overnight. Suddenly the market shifts. Soon it begins its downward plunge. Pessimism is now the order of the day.

Sell, sell, sell. And prices plunge still further.

Yet bigger stock market profits can be made at a time of falling markets than in times of expanding markets. The great Wall Street crash of 1929 produced its

share of suicides; it also produced a quota of fortunes for those whose financial game plans anticipated the survival strategies that involved purchasing AT&T and General Motors when they were heading towards apparent extinction, and holding them for their revival.

But of course you knew all that. I'm telling you the obvious again.

What is never obvious, however, is how these strategies apply to your own particular business. Even less obvious is to anticipate the need to apply them. Furthermore, just as some investors made their greatest killings at a time when others were killing themselves, it is possible for businesses, at a time of recession, not merely to survive, but actually to prosper.

To become one of the businesses that gain when others lose you need to take your head out of your balance sheet, put considerations of cash flow to one side, and concentrate on other features of your business. The ability to gain the confidence, the respect and - above all - the loyalty of your customers begins - like charity - at home. This is not to say that you can afford to disregard asset management, but you would be ill-advised to concentrate your energies on it to the detriment of your employees, nor to concern yourself with the latter to the detriment of your customers. The three considerations are inextricably interwoven at all times, but never more so than in recessionary conditions.

I would suggest that, given a recession, the main financial concern of Management should be simply to ensure break-even. Considerations of profit should take second place to re-investment of funds into personnel resources: use your people to ensure that receivables do not spiral out of control; collect your debts regularly and efficiently; do not moan when a debtor goes bankrupt: "But they were always so reliable!" And resist the temptation to cut back on marketing expenditure. This means both your sales force and your advertising budget. It is essential that your sales people maintain - and even increase - contact with new and existing customers, both in order to secure new business and to monitor the state of health of debtors.

Certainly you will have to cut costs at these times; the first and most obvious area to examine is that of outgoings that may be easily pruned, but it must be done sagely and not at the expense of gaining or administering business. Never forget that you do not need to make a profit in order to survive; you merely need to cover costs. And in times of business downturn, breaking even should be the bottom line. Resources therefore need to be allocated where they will do the most good as far as survival is concerned; profit is very much a secondary consideration. Do not cut costs where customer confidence or staff morale may suffer. At the risk of boring you, I repeat that in recessionary conditions your two major assets are contented customers and happy staff.

Welcome the challenge. When the going gets tough . .

But you know that, don't you?

Your successor – your success!

It's a sad but all too frequent reality that senior people within organisations regularly try to protect their position by restraining their subordinates from developing their potential.

Indeed, it is not only senior people who adopt this ill-considered practice of self-protection, but it is a defect that seems to spread throughout organisations from bottom to top. The rationalization is undoubtedly a fear that encouraging one's peers or juniors to develop their leadership capabilities might hasten the demise of one's own position.

And yet nothing could be further from the truth. The sad fact is that failure to nurture the potential of someone who might be your successor could, when the time eventually comes for you to leave the organisation (for whatever reason) simply ensure the early demise of the organisation itself.

The defining act of a true leader or manager is nurturing a successor *before* it becomes necessary for someone to succeed you. You may be the most effective administrator, marketing executive, or financial controller your company has ever had, but a poorly developed successor could undo in months what you may have achieved in years.

Promoting from within will always be more cost-effective than recruiting from outside. Yet it has become almost axiomatic that top executives in the United Kingdom are recruited from outside because it is considered that there is a dearth of talent at the next level down from the departing executive. Spending time and money on developing the latent talent within an organisation will pay for itself over and over. And executives who are able to do this will not be "working themselves out of a job", but will be prized by their employers.

There are a number of methods that may be used in achieving the aim of nurturing potential in successors.

Company Values.

Every opportunity should be taken to impress the values of the company upon co-workers and subordinates, so that they learn to appreciate the principles to which the company adheres and are able to reflect those principles when dealing with other members of staff and outside contacts

Teamwork.

By the use of groupwork and building teams that can not merely work together but can develop a synergy, you can ensure that whoever is promoted from within the company will continue to enjoy the support of their colleagues.

Information. It is important to keep all members of your team fully informed about all developments, current and projected, so that they feel themselves to be an integral and valuable part of the organisation.

Responsibility. Your staff have to feel trusted to undertake increasingly more difficult tasks, in the knowledge that they will be receiving adequate support and cooperation.

Creativity. Staff must be encouraged to produce innovative solutions to problems, confident that their suggestions will be credited to them.

Training. One of the more usual reasons for recruiting successors from outside is because there have been developments in the industry where your company may have lagged behind. Staff have to be encouraged to seek out and embark on training programmes that will ensure that successors will be fully equipped to cope with all new developments. “You cannot teach an old dog new tricks”, may be a good enough dictum for the person about to retire, but that person certainly needs to ensure that the young dogs who will be taking over are alive to all the new tricks.

You will long be remembered with warmth and gratitude if you have succeeded in nurturing your present staff and your successors before taking your leave of the company. The time to start is now.

Nurturing the Potential of Your People

*"If the outcome is good, what's the difference
between motives that
sound good and good sound motives?"*

Laurence J. Peter, Author of *The Peter Principle*.

Effective managers are able to recognise the potential of their staff, to nurture that potential, to motivate the employees so that they may achieve more, but to be able to identify the limits of their potential.

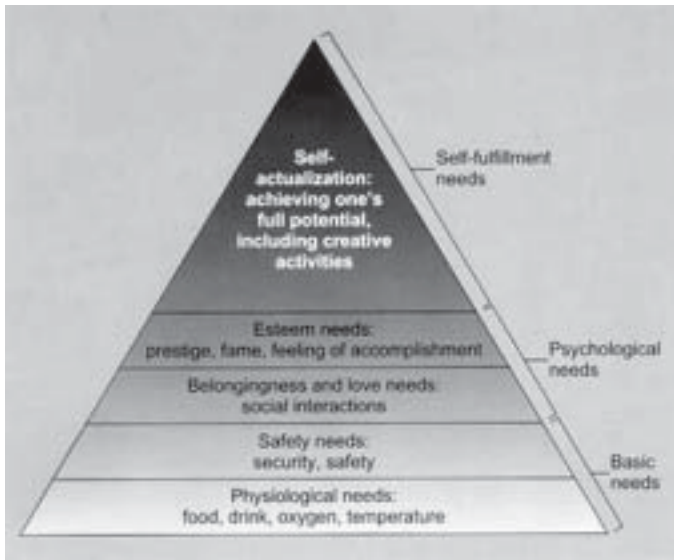
There is a paradox inherent in that paragraph. Potential, by its very definition, is incapable of being limited; it is infinite. But this is to equivocate; it is the difference between the ideal and the practical. In the "real" world, there are too many undisclosed agendas in a person's apparent inability to mature and develop. Too often people in the workplace have an investment in holding themselves back; there may be other demands on their time and their energies, other needs they wish to satisfy, that are more important than promotion.

A mark of the manager's skill is to be able to identify which staff will respond to motivation and which staff will, in Laurence Peter's prescription: "be promoted beyond their capacity for competence."

So the managerial skill is not merely the recognition of potential in those people who will benefit from careful nurturing, but also to identify the personal motivating forces that may be most effectively harnessed in each individual for optimum result. Heller and Hindle ^[1] make the very useful point that motivation is equally necessary on other levels. It is not enough to encourage only subordinates to expand the frontiers of their potential, but colleagues and senior personnel also will benefit from being asked to share your vision, your ideas, and your enthusiasm

To release the full potential of employees, organisations are rapidly moving away from "command and control" and towards "advise and consent" as ways of motivating. This change of attitude began when employers recognised that rewarding good work is more effective than threatening punitive measures for bad work ^[1]

An excellent tool for assessing the values and belief systems of your employees, and using that knowledge in order to motivate them to achieve more of their potential, is Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. This recognises that people's needs follow a very specific and clearly defined order of importance: until needs on the lowest, most basic physiological levels are satisfied, there is little incentive to indulge the more spiritual desires. This is expressed in the following graphic:



The wise manager will ensure that these "motivational forces" are all given attention. He will recognise that satisfying the physiological needs by the provision of pay and other financial rewards is not enough. The importance of working conditions, the need for appreciation and respect, interaction with management and other staff, and being made to feel an important member of the organisation are all basic requirements.

On the other hand, it would be a grave misjudgement to treat Maslow's theories, or those of other "gurus" of motivation (applied to business), as dogma. I'll refer to some of them shortly, but meanwhile it is appropriate, I think, to quote the words of Peter Drucker, probably the most highly regarded of all management experts, (of whom Tom Peters wrote: "Our debt to Peter Drucker knows no limit"), in his book *Management*:^[2]

What Maslow didn't realize is that a want changes in the act of being satisfied. As the economic want is satisfied, that is, as people no longer have to subordinate every other human need and human value to getting the next meal, it becomes less and less satisfying to obtain more economic rewards. But economic rewards do not become any less important. On the contrary, while the impact of an economic reward as a positive incentive decreases, its capacity to create dissatisfaction, if disappointed, rapidly increases. Economic rewards cease to be 'incentives' and become 'entitlements'. If not properly taken care of - that is, if there is dissatisfaction with the economic rewards - they become deterrents.

Douglas McGregor (1906-1964), a social psychologist of the behavioural school, believed that the way managers responded to their staff was influenced by certain assumptions. He suggested that behavioural patterns of people at work separated into two extremes that he designated Theory X and Theory Y.^[3] Theory X was what McGregor called the "traditional view of direction and control"; Theory Y, which McGregor advocated, assumed a much more cooperative and reciprocal relationship between managers and workers, and was a starting point for Abraham Maslow's later theories, although Maslow considered that Theory Y made inhuman demands on the weaker members of an organisation.

Theory X	Theory Y
People dislike work and will avoid it if they can	Work is necessary to human psychological growth. People want to be interested in their work and, under the right conditions, they can enjoy it.
People must be forced or bribed to put out the right effort	People will direct themselves towards an accepted target
People would rather be directed than accept responsibility, which they avoid	People will seek, and accept, responsibility under the right conditions. The discipline people impose on themselves is more effective, and can be more severe, than any imposed on them.
People are motivated mainly by money. People are motivated by anxiety about their security.	Under the right conditions, people are motivated by the desire to realise their own potential.
Most people have little creativity - except when it comes to getting round management rules.	Creativity and ingenuity are widely distributed and grossly

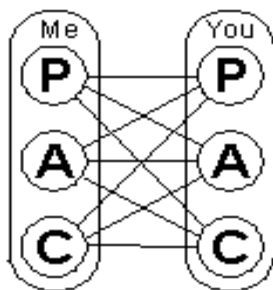
Amongst other pioneers in the cause of achieving maximum motivation of commitment and the fulfilment of potential in business, Kurt Lewin developed the controversial concept of T-Group Training at the National Training Laboratories in Bethel, Maine, USA, in the mid-1940s, but died before the Maine experiments took place. The training involved much introspection and consequent disclosure to others of their fears and resentments, as well as the effect that the behaviour of others had on themselves.

This information was the basis of discussion on how people could best collaborate if they changed their behaviours. Despite the stress and emotional response that this induced in participants, often resulting in diminished rather than improved performance, the movement persisted, both at Bethel and at Britain's Tavistock Institute.

The main implication of this in the development of management philosophy was the discovery that employees are more highly motivated and productive if they participate in working out how changes should take place. This was a revolutionary concept at the time.

Somewhat less revolutionary, but equally adaptable to the way in which managers and staff could best collaborate in order to achieve optimum development of potential, was Eric Berne's (1910-1970) Transactional Analysis (TA). with its emphasis on Ego States. These States (Child, Parent and Adult) represented behaviour patterns that make collaboration and cooperation difficult whenever two states failed to "mesh". Berne himself maintained that problems in staff relationships were exacerbated when people were in the wrong state to deal with a particular situation. Thus (to use the terminology of TA), "transactions" between people would inevitably fail when they were "crossed" (i.e. inappropriate), but could succeed when they were "complementary" (i.e. appropriate). Understanding Ego States (that is, understanding where the other person "is coming from" - and, indeed, the State you are in yourself - is a major key to profitable and constructive interaction between yourself and your "people".

The following graphic illustrates the conditions pertaining to complementary and crossed transactions, where P = Parent, A=Adult and C=Child.



There are many more social scientists that I might refer to, in order to amplify this thesis, but I will content myself with just management guru Chris Argyris (Born 1923), Professor of Education and Organizational Behavior at Harvard Business School.

Argyris departs from the scientific management approach as ignoring the social and egotistical needs of the individual. He believes every individual should achieve his or her potential. Each of us has "psychological energy" which provides motivation. Our concern should not be how to create motivation, therefore, but where to channel it.

A major contribution to organisational learning and management techniques resulted from his development of his double loop theory of learning and organisational effectiveness. This was a logical step from his "theory in use" versus "espoused theory" studies. Argyris has explained this in an article in Organizational Dynamics, by the following analogy: "When a thermostat turns the heat on or off, it is acting in keeping with the program of orders given to it to keep the room temperature . . . at 68 degrees. This is single-loop learning, because the underlying program is not questioned. The overwhelming amount of learning done in an organization is single loop, because it is designed to identify and correct errors so that the job gets done . . . within stated policy guidelines. . .

"Whereas single-loop learning merely changes strategies and assumptions within a fairly constant set of norms, double-loop learning also questions the norms. It frequently involves conflict, either between established requirements or between individual managers and departments . . . each cycle where double-loop learning takes place helps create patterns for future learning."

Clear and unambiguous information has to be provided to avoid errors and channel motivation. In his work of 1992 ^[4] Argyris discusses the defences that individuals and organizations put up to resist double-loop learning. A chart shows how information may be provided both to defeat and enhance the nurturing of an individual's potential:

[Error]	[Learning]
Vague	Concrete
Unclear	Clear
Inconsistent	Consistent
incongruent	Congruent
Scattered	Available

In the course of an interview by the Universidad Católica Andrés Bello of Venezuela, in the early 1990s, Argyris stated: "Increasingly, the art of management is managing knowledge. That means we do not manage people per se, but rather the knowledge that they carry. And leadership means creating the conditions that enable people to produce valid knowledge and to do so in ways that encourage personal responsibility.

"Let me also say at the outset that I'm interested in action, and not simply knowledge for the purpose of understanding and explaining. . . The irony is that human beings can do both. They systematically do the first with what I call the espouse theory -- they espouse certain theories to explain what the world is about. But what really influences their actions are their "theories in use." These are designs that tell people how to behave in an organizational context."

. . . when executives deal with difficult, threatening, underlying issues, they use reasoning processes that, at best, simultaneously lead to immediate success and long-range problems. Often the problems go unsolved, compounding the long range difficulties. Much of this occurs without executives realizing it. ^[5]

I have only skimmed the surface material of those few "gurus" of management and organizational method I have mentioned. . There are many more. At the end of the day, however, nurturing your people's potential is as much about nurturing your own, and defining and establishing where you are coming from in your interactions with your staff, your colleagues and your senior personnel, as it is about recognising their strengths and weaknesses.

[1] Robert Heller and Tim Hindle - Essential Manager's Manual, 1998.





[2] P.F. Drucker. Management. Pan, London, 1977.

[3] Douglas McGregor, The Human Side of Enterprise, McGraw Hill, 1964.

[4] Chris Argyris, On Organizational Learning, Blackwell Publishing, 1992.

[5] Chris Argyris, "The Executive Mind and Double-loop Learning", Organizational Dynamics, Autumn 1982.

Now assess your staff-nurturing ability

Never	Occasionally	Frequently	Always
			
Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Score 4

1. I persuade my staff rather than coerce them into enhanced performance.
2. I continually examine the need for improved working conditions.
3. I encourage people to air their grievances - and
4. I provide a regular forum for discussion by people.
5. I keep my staff fully informed about possible changes that might affect them.
6. I involve people in developments at an early stage.
7. I encourage people to act on their own initiative - but
8. I acknowledge my own responsibility for actions that are taken.
9. I explain my actions, particularly when they affect staff.
10. I avoid blaming, but insist on analysing reasons for failure.
11. I am always aware of my own needs and motivations.
12. I take a keen interest in my people's personal needs and motivations.
13. I delegate work wherever and whenever possible.
14. I keep a close watch for any examples of potential being under-utilised.
15. I consult subordinates, colleagues and senior personnel regularly.
16. I do not criticise encourage feedback.
17. I believe that regular change is preferable to maintaining policy rigidity.
18. I recognise merit and will reward it appropriately.
19. I regularly appraise performance and promote from within the company.
20. In appraisal meetings I encourage criticism of my own performance.

The maximum number of points you can score is 80. Any score between 60 and 80 is evidence that you are a strong motivator with highly developed potential-nurturing skills. It also suggests that you may be too complacent. Improvement is always possible. 40 to 60 points reveal a fairly sound motivational ability, with room for improvement. If you have scored below 40 points, performance is poor and your staff may be suffering. Examine particularly the areas where you have scored badly and try to adopt new methods and strategies.

Sustainable Development and Business

More and more attention is being paid to the concept of sustainable development, yet it is a concept to which many business executives fail to relate. To the practical business executive, the concept may appear so abstract as to be effectually incomprehensible.

Executives will readily appreciate the need to protect their company's financial resources, yet they regularly fail to recognise the importance of extending this concern to the world's natural and human resources. A definition of sustainable development in business might be: to adopt business strategies that meet the organisation's traditional needs at the present time while protecting, sustaining and enhancing the human and natural resources that will be needed in the future. Today, more than ever before, organizations need to acknowledge a changing business environment where an increasing involvement in human resource planning and management is an essential part of the overall strategic decision-making process, while still keeping a weather eye on their competitive advantage.

Human resource planning is accordingly most effective where a firm builds its competitive advantage around its personnel. This idealised situation, however, is threatened by the increasing trend towards globalisation of markets. In the past it was possible to base decisions on competition faced from only local firms. Nowadays the increasing integration of the world economy into a single market, the intensifying of competition, and the pressure of deregulation has obliged employers to find new ways of achieving cost-effectiveness, often at the expense of diminishing concern for the human and the natural resource sectors.

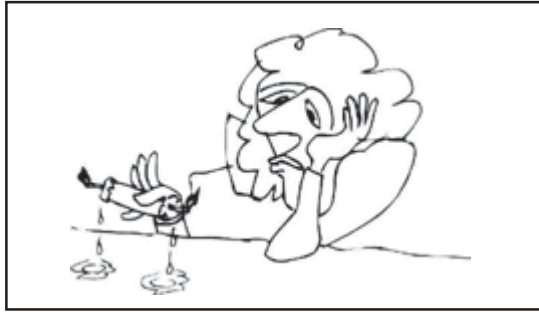
Successful corporate executives have always been those who have displayed vision. That vision, in the past, was primarily concerned with the economic goals of the organisation. Nowadays it is essential that their vision also embraces the concerns of the global ecological crisis. There are traditionally three ways of dealing with this crisis: the organisational policy may be simply to ignore the demand for ecologically beneficent change; it may merely pay lip-service to such demand; or it could embrace and support ecological change wholeheartedly.

But still there remains a reactionary guard who stoutly defend old beliefs and outmoded principles. And yet, in slightly tongue-in-cheek justification of that resistance one has to ask whether sustainability is possible; whether, in fact, natural resources (if not human) have gone beyond redemption. We may, indeed, already have passed the point of no return . . . the point where our planetary resources will ever again be able to support the population – particularly at the rate at which the population has increased during the past five decades. It may now be time for the entire world to have its energies devoted to replacing and restoring the deterioration in resources rather than simply try to maintain them at their present level . . . a forlorn task if ever there was one.

Edward de Bono has noted ^[1] "The furrier industry is going out of business. McDonalds has dropped the polystyrene containers that used to keep hamburgers warm. Recycled paper proudly proclaims itself . . . Smoking is banned on many flights and in many work places . . . These newer values will initially be forced on to business, but will then be embraced by business as part of conventional wisdom."

[1] De Bono. *Sur/Petition. Creating Value Monopolies When Everyone Else is Merely Competing*. Collins 1999.

Are You a Candidate for Burnout?



WHAT IS BURNOUT?

Burnout is a popular term to describe the condition of fatigue or frustration commonly associated with over-achievers. In their efforts to achieve unrealistic goals, such people deplete their energy and, ironically, it is usually people who have been most energetic and enthusiastic about their work that run the greatest risk of burnout.

The enthusiasm exhibited at the beginning of a project gradually recedes as expectations of success or achievement fade. The person becomes listless, impatient, physically exhausted, and tends to lose all interest.

There are several warning signs of the onset of burnout. The failure to set priorities when faced with alternative and conflicting areas of responsibility is one. Another danger is when the person is left without a clear indication of his or her role; with no guidelines they will feel that they have failed to achieve what may have been expected of them. Frequently the problem is associated with the individual's own willingness to take on too much responsibility. Burnout arises when they finally have more than can be handled by one person.

STEPS AND SIGNS

There are some clear and effective steps to be taken when burnout signs appear. The onset of feelings of tiredness and inability to relax needs to be explored. Have you always been under pressure to succeed? If not, try to recall when this driving force first became over-important to you.

Can you identify a period when you started to lose your sense of humour? Can you recall when you first started having disagreements with your friends and colleagues? Was there a time when your responsibilities became a matter of overpowering personal involvement, when you were identifying with them to the extent that you measured your own personal success or failure with that of the work you were doing?

If the answer to even some of these questions is “yes”, it is a clear indication that it is time to re-evaluate your values and priorities. When work is no longer a pleasurable challenge, it is time to consider what changes need to be made. Do you need to change your priorities? Do you need to change your duties? Do you need to change your job? Or do you simply need a break?

OTHER SOLUTIONS

[First prepare a written list of two columns. Then write down the following questions on the left hand side.]

- What are my short term goals and long-term desired outcomes?
- What has been happening to my personal relationships?
- Am I open enough with other people? Do I talk to them about my problems and my feelings? Do I share my anxieties, my fears, my frustrations?
- Do I do enough physical exercise? What can I do about this?
- Am I too tense? Should I learn some relaxation techniques?
- Do I eat too much or too little? Should I change my eating habits?
- Do I drink too much or too little? Should I change my drinking habits?
- Do I smoke? Is it time to give up?
- How might I incorporate some time management techniques into my life?
- Do I automatically take on extra work when asked? What would happen if I learned to say “No”?

Now consider the questions carefully, giving no less than ten minutes thought to each question. Then write your answers in the right-hand column. Then go through the answers, one by one, again giving no less than ten minutes thought to each answer.

Have you been totally honest with yourself?

Might you be blaming yourself for past situations that no longer have any relevance to your current activities? Not only can you not alter a past that no longer exists except as a historical event, but you cannot alter the you that existed in the past. That was someone else, somewhere else, doing something else. Time to move forward.

If you don’t know where you’re going, any road will lead you there.

There are no prescriptions that anyone can provide to deal with your burnout which will be more effective than those you can provide for yourself, once you allow yourself to become aware of your needs. It is your own well-being that is at stake, and it has to be your own choice. You need to get in touch with yourself, with your values and what you want out of life

At the end of the day do you want to be at the end of your tether, or would you rather be looking forward to a bright new day? Silly question. But how many people, I wonder, suffering the symptoms of burnout, take time out to ask themselves that silly question?

I recall reading about a survey conducted with geriatric patients in a nursing home. They were asked what they might do differently if they could re-live their lives. Amongst the variety of answers, one response stood out loud and clear: they would spend more time reflecting on what they had achieved and enjoying their successes before it was too late.

The time to start is now.

Did I really say that?

Before giving my first presentation at a conference session in the 1970s, I was offered the following advice:

- Introduce yourself
- Tell them what you're going to tell them
- Tell them
- Tell them what you've told them
- Say goodbye

With minor variations, this is the advice I have followed ever since.

A decade earlier I had regularly attended the annual Christmas luncheons hosted by a road tank manufacturer at the St. Ermin's Hotel in Westminster. The company's chairman invariably prefaced his post-prandial speech with a humorous story. It was a very funny story. We all, without exception, laughed uproariously. This was peculiar indeed, given that it was the same story he told every year: about the camel-castrators who performed their operation with a pair of large stones. When asked: "Surely that's extremely painful?" they responded: "Not if you keep your thumbs out of the way."

So why was George Darrington's (for that was his name) recitation greeted with such glee. In fact it was an integral part of the annual experience. It was simply because George himself was so beloved of his audience, his idiosyncrasies were such a delight, and it is a facet of human nature that we welcome the familiar with keen anticipation. Witness for example the "Oh no he didn't" - "Oh yes he did" pantomime dialogue in which audience participation starts with the very young and the enjoyment of which apparently ends only when we are eventually laid to rest.

For most of us, however, recognition and respect does not come so easily. We have to earn it, as George did over several decades. He did not have to start his speech with "I am George Darrington", nor did he have to end it with a reminder of his name. Of course, addressing a gathering of friends is somewhat different from making a presentation to a large, anonymous group who have not heard your camel castrator joke and would, in that environment, probably fail to appreciate it.

So although it is still a useful device to introduce your "tell them what you're going to tell them" section with some humour, it must be used appropriately and judiciously . . . never gratuitously. It should be relevant to the presentation. If it can be based on a real, preferably personal, situation, so much the better. Ideally the presentation would start with one such anecdote and end with another.

One of the stories I used to tell when presenting workshops for the co-counselling community related to an experience I had had in Dublin. At one time it was part of the Highway Code in the UK to make right turns at intersections by driving around approaching cars also wishing to turn right. This later changed to driving in front of approaching cars as this was found to cause less traffic jams. Once, when driving in Dublin, I approached a crossing manned by a traffic policeman and stopped, partially turned in front of him, ready to turn right when oncoming traffic permitted. He approached my side window and said: "I know you do it differently in England, but here in Ireland you always drive around the back of me . . . even when I'm not here!"

I stopped telling this particular story when, on one occasion, it was interrupted by an unidentified voice muttering: "Heard it!". I guess I didn't have the George Darrington touch.

I vividly recall another occasion when I addressed a number of world-wide agents attending our company conference in Venice. This was after I had spent a five-year stint as marketing manager in the Far East. One of the agents asked me what I had found most memorable during my overseas posting. I replied; "I think it was the wonder of the exotic locations I was able to visit." There was no reaction, apart from our two Japanese agents who both nodded sagely.

Later the Japanese agents spoke to me. "Tell me, Sinclair-san," said Mizukami, "Was it Shimbashi or Bangkok that was so erotic?" I laughed, thinking this was a clever play on words by my Japanese friends, not normally known for their linguistical skills. I repeated this to one of my colleagues later. "Didn't anyone tell you?" he asked. "You actually did say 'erotic' locations."

My name is Joe Sinclair.

Goodbye.

The Business of Communication

It is a common fallacy that communication is simply the use of words to describe what we want to convey to others.

In fact we are continually communicating, even when we are unaware of doing so. Our output is via speech and body language; our input is via our sensory systems, particularly those of sight, sound and feeling. But communication, to be effective, is a two-way process. It consists of a message being given and a message being received. Thus a spoken message to a deaf person who cannot lip-read does not constitute a communication. A shrug or a gesture with the hands would be much more effective in such a situation. Contrarily, body language would be totally ineffective with someone who is blind, yet speech unaccompanied by the body language or facial expressions that frequently aid meaning, might equally result in a failure to communicate a precise message



When we consider the importance of communication in business we need to appreciate that success or failure can reflect the effectiveness of the communication skills that are employed. Communication needs to be open and honest in order to build trust; it needs to be equally effective on verbal and non-verbal levels; it is as important to listen and to observe as it is to speak.

In the system of psychology known as Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP), this situation is covered by one of its principles (or presuppositions), namely "the meaning of a communication is the response it elicits".

An intended communication is not always what is understood by the other person. When this happens, the intention of the speaker is irrelevant; what is important is the message that is received; and the message is generated as much by body language and tone of voice as the words themselves.

Let's take a simple example.



What do you think is the message being conveyed by the man in this illustration? If we are to judge by the words alone it is one of love and caring and reassurance. It is doubtful, however, if the woman is feeling reassured. The words, in fact, are at total variance with the body language. In NLP terms this is known as incongruence.

How do you think a prospective customer might feel if a sales representative started thumping the desk and insisting "Of course I'm offering you the best package in the world!" As was said above, communication must be open and honest if it is to build trust; and the open-ness and honesty have to be expressed on both verbal and non-verbal levels. It is important, in other words (to use another favoured NLP expression) to achieve rapport.

Rapport is a process of building a relationship of mutual trust, harmony and understanding. It means meeting others in their model of the world. It means being on the same wavelength and connecting mentally and emotionally. It doesn't mean necessarily having to agree entirely with the other person, but simply knowing where they are coming from. It is achieved when two people can see each other's viewpoint, appreciate each other's feelings, and effectively put themselves in the other's shoes.

In this context, let us consider another NLP presupposition: "there is no failure, only feedback". When a communication elicits a totally incongruous response it is, perhaps, time to ask oneself if the response was induced by our own failure to communicate effectively rather than (as there is a tendency to do) assume that the listener or interlocutor is having a problem. Reverting to the picture above, it could be that the incongruent behaviour being exhibited was induced by an "inappropriate" message that had been received. It is, however, incumbent on both parties in a dialogue to be aware of the need to be in harmony . . . to achieve rapport.

Thomas Edison is reputed to have said: “I have not failed. I’ve simply found 10,000 ways that don’t work.” Apparent failure to communicate is merely an indication that another way has to be found.

“Every behaviour has a positive intention” is yet another NLP presupposition. This is based on the recognition that we all have different models of reality . . . different maps for the same territory. Somebody’s words or behaviour that make no sense to us are more than likely to be merely the “right” way for them, given their model of the world. Instead of reacting instinctively to behaviour that we find strange, hurtful, or inappropriate, we might try to comprehend that this may be the best way the other person will behave given the resources available to them. What we have to do is to look behind the words or the behaviour to try and find the positive intent.

So what was the positive intent behind the behaviour of the man in the picture, thumping the table to indicate love? Possibly the incongruent behaviour resulted from frustration; an inability properly to connect; a sensitive button being pressed; or a reflex response being triggered. The moment we try to understand that there is a positive intention, we are on the way to understanding the person and to establishing rapport.

And the moment we understand that, we can recognise that it is incumbent upon us to try and find another way to help the other person achieve their positive intention and for us to achieve our desired outcome.

It should not be forgotten that we are each in control of our own minds. Nobody else can choose our values and our beliefs for us - although they may try to influence them - so our model of the world and the way we experience different events is within our ability to change to a different perspective. A useful exercise is to consider how each of the above presuppositions might affect (or have affected historically) the things that happen to us, or have happened in the past. My notebook has the following suggestions taken from a course I followed many years ago:

1. Try to incorporate these presuppositions into my life by selecting a different one each day and applying it whenever an opportunity arises to improve rapport with another.
2. Recall a situation in the past when I might have done better in communicating my desired outcome or in comprehending that of someone else. Examine the situation in the light of each presupposition. Establish what this tells me about myself and what options are available to me should a similar situation arise in the future.

The art of influencing without manipulating, achieving rapport, and respecting another person’s integrity while maintaining your own is known as dovetailing outcomes. Conflicts occur because we have different models of the world even though we may have similar outcomes which we fail to recognise through poor communication.

The concluding paragraphs of Genie Laborde's wonderful book *Influencing With Integrity* [Syntony Publishing, 1983] states:

“When we choose to dovetail our outcomes with others, we are choosing personal integrity . . . seeking ways to dovetail avoids manipulation and protects you from resentments, recriminations, buyers' remorse, and revenge. Dovetailing is simply more practical and intelligent than manipulating . . .

“To influence well and in an appropriate way has been the concern of thinkers through the ages. Now we have superior tools for influencing. The use of these tools and the integrity of that use is in your hands.”

Education and Learning

Education and Learning

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Clear your mind of can't.

Make war on won't.

Don't communicate oughtism.

Theories of Learning

There are a lot of different theories of how people learn and I am not only unable to describe all of them in the confines of this magazine article, but I would be the wrong person to try and explain them in any great depth.

I take heart however from the Shavian dictum about those who can and those who teach, and would like to whet your appetite by introducing you to just a few of these theories and providing links to further study.

All teachers have their own particular styles of teaching, and their own particular beliefs about the best way of learning. It can be very revealing and instructive to study how successful teachers, specifically those who favour other methods than your own, achieve their results. Neuro-Linguistic Programming, for instance, was developed as a result of two University of California colleagues exploring just such a modelling of excellence by Fritz Perls (Gestalt), Virginia Satir (Family Therapy) and Milton Erickson (Hypnotherapy).

Here is a list of the (few) theories I have included in this article. Positive feedback may encourage me to add to the list in a future issue of Nurturing Potential.

1. Action Learning
2. Andragogy (Adult Learning)
3. Cognitive Learning
4. Experiential Learning
5. Humanist Learning
6. Reinforcement Learning

ACTION LEARNING

Action Learning is the approach that links the world of learning with the world of action through “action learning sets”. These “sets” are small groups that meet regularly to study the real-life issues of their members, seeking to learn with and from each other. The founder of Action Learning, Reg Revans, maintained that there can be no learning without action and no specific action without learning. He was scathing about the value of traditional ‘chalk and talk’ management education which prevailed during the 1960s and 1970s, arguing that people learned most effectively not from books, lecturers or teachers, but from sharing real problems with others.

He argued that Action Learning is ideal for solving problems that do not have a “right” answer because people learning from and with each other in “sets” are able to achieve the appropriate questioning insight.

Some of the big advantages in working within these sets are:

- Sharing the work load.
- Covering a wider research base.
- Increased and varied thinking power.
- Greater self-awareness and self-confidence due to new insights and feedback.
- Enhanced working relationships with team members.
- Ability to ask better questions and be more reflective.
- Learning from the varied strengths of others within the sets.

ANDRAGOGY (ADULT LEARNING)

The term Andragogy was invented by the German Alexander Kapp in 1833 to differentiate adult learning from Pedagogy (learning by children). The concept of Adult Learning was further developed by Malcolm Knowles (The Adult Learner, 1978) who believed that adulthood was the province of people who believe themselves to be adults and who behave in adult ways. Such people should be treated as adults. In Knowles's own words, "Andragogy is the art and science of helping adults learn".

It is my own observation that those students who have entered a professional school or a job have made a big step toward seeing themselves as essentially self-directing. They have largely resolved their identity-formation issues; they are identified with an adult role. Any experience that they perceive as putting them in the position of being treated as children is bound to interface with their learning. (Knowles, 1978:56)

Andragogy assumes that the point at which an individual achieves a self-concept of essential self-direction is the point at which the individual psychologically becomes adult. A very critical thing happens when this occurs: individuals develop a deep psychological need to be perceived by others as being self-directing. Thus, when in a situation in which they are not allowed to be self-directing, they experiences a tension between that situation and their self-concept. Their reaction is bound to be tainted with resentment and resistance.

Knowles makes the following assumptions:

- The need to know. Adult learners need to know why they need to learn something before attempting to learn it.
- Learner self-concept. Adults need to be responsible for their own decisions and to be treated as capable of self-direction.
- Role of learners' experience. Adult learners have a variety of experiences of life which represent the richest resource for learning. These experiences are, however, imbued with bias and presupposition.
- Readiness to learn. Adults are ready to learn those things they need to know

in order to cope effectively with life situations.

●Orientation to learning. Adults are motivated to learn to the extent that they perceive that it will help them perform tasks they confront in their life situations. (Knowles 1990)

One major criticism of Knowles' andragogy is that its emphasis on learning from peers makes it an inefficient instrument for the transmission of knowledge, although they value the way in which it avoids (or evades) the problems of resentment of authority and counter-dependence which they see as implicit in the normal pedagogic structure.

COGNITIVE LEARNING THEORY

This is a general approach that views learning as an active mental process of acquiring, remembering, and using knowledge. Learning is evidenced by a change in knowledge which makes a change in behaviour possible. Learning itself is not directly observable.

Basic to the theory is the belief that learning proceeds through a series of stages. It begins with the cognitive stage, an instructional stage where the learner develops a rough mental representation of task requirements. In the second stage, the associative stage, this representation is strengthened and refined, but remains subject to rules and is not yet divorced from outside support. The third stage of learning is the autonomous stage where the learner is able to perform the task automatically and autonomously. Fundamental to cognitive learning theory is the necessity for students to progress through these stages, with extensive practice and feedback, as well as instruction in the use of various learning strategies.

Cognitive learning theory owes much to the work of Benjamin Bloom (1956) whose theories were widely applied in law enforcement training. Bloom identified six levels of learning, ranging from simple recognition or recall of facts at its base, through increasingly complex and abstract mental levels, to the highest order - evaluation. These were:

- Knowledge: arrange, define, duplicate, label, list, memorise, name, order, recognise, relate, recall, repeat.
- Comprehension: classify, describe, discuss, explain, express, identify, indicate, locate, recognise, report, restate, review, select, translate.
- Application: apply, choose, demonstrate, dramatise, employ, illustrate, interpret, operate, practice, schedule, sketch, solve, use, write.
- Analysis: analyse, appraise, calculate, categorise, compare, contrast, criticise, differentiate, discriminate, distinguish, examine, experiment, question, test.
- Synthesis: arrange, assemble, collect, compose, construct, create, design, develop, formulate, manage, organize, plan, prepare, propose, set up, write.
- Evaluation: appraise, argue, assess, attach, choose, compare, defend, estimate, judge, predict, rate, core, select, support, value, evaluate.

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

“Tell me and I will forget. Show me and I may remember. Involve me and I will understand.” Such was the advice of Confucius about half a millennium before the birth of Christ.

Some two-and-a-half millennia later, David Kolb’s *Experiential Learning: experience as the source of learning and development* (1984) preached a similar message and had an enormous influence on the process of designing and developing a learning model for a lifetime.

The kick-off point for Kolb’s model is Kurt Lewin’s cycle of adult learning:



Kolb posited that people learn in four ways, with one mode of learning being more developed than another (see above) and that it did not really matter at which point in the cycle individuals began.

Subsequently, Honey and Mumford, building on Kolb’s work, identified four learning styles: Activist (enjoying the experience itself), Reflector (spending much time and effort in reflection), Theorist (good at making connections and abstracting ideas from experience), and Pragmatist (enjoying the planning stage).

There are strengths and weaknesses in each of these styles. Honey and Mumford argue that learning is enhanced when we think about our learning style so that we can build on strengths and work towards minimising weaknesses to improve the quality of learning.

HUMANIST LEARNING THEORY

This emphasises the natural desire of everyone to learn and maintains that learners need to be empowered to have control over the learning process. From the follows the requirement that the teacher relinquishes a great deal of authority and becomes a facilitator. Hence the theory is sometimes called the Facilitative Learning Theory.

This model is particularly associated with Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow from the field of psychology, John Holt from the province of child education, and Knowles and Kolb, whom we have already encountered in connection with the theories of Andragogy and Cognitive Learning respectively.

The main characteristic of the theory is, as stated above, that educators act as facilitators in order to produce a more comfortable atmosphere in which learners do not feel threatened by external factors. But other premises are that while people have a natural desire to learn, there is a fundamental resistance to abandoning currently held beliefs, and that the most significant aspect of learning consists of changing one's concept of oneself.

In the humanist model, teachers are less protective of their own beliefs and more willing to pay attention to learners and to respect their feelings. They also tend to pay as much attention to their relationship with the learners as they do to the content of the material being taught. Furthermore all feedback is regarded as positive and is welcomed as an insight into themselves and their own behaviour.

Learners are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning and to contribute their insights and experiences to the common benefit. The most valuable evaluation is considered to be self-evaluation and learning is encouraged to focus on factors that help solve significant problems or achieve significant results.

REINFORCEMENT LEARNING

This is a learning theory that was developed by the behaviourist school of psychology, notably by B.F. Skinner, early in the 20th century, the basic concept being that a learner will repeat a desired behaviour if positive reinforcement, i.e. a pleasant consequence, follows the behaviour.

Positive reinforcement, or rewards, can range from verbal reinforcement such as "Well done", or "You've picked that up pretty well", to more tangible rewards, such as a prized qualification at the conclusion of a course, or promotion to a higher position within an organisation.

Negative reinforcement may also strengthen a behaviour when a negative situation may be avoided or stopped as a result of the behaviour.

There are actually three rules governing reinforcement:

1. Consequences which give rewards increase a behaviour.
2. Consequences which give punishments decrease a behaviour.
3. Consequences which give neither rewards nor punishments extinguish a behaviour.

Reinforcement, in other words, is another name for the outcomes of our behaviour. Its value refers to the desirability of these outcomes. Things we want to happen, that we are attracted to, have a high reinforcement value. Things we don't want to happen, that we wish to avoid, have a low reinforcement value. If the likelihood of achieving reinforcement is the same, we will exhibit the behaviour with the greatest reinforcement value, i.e. the one directed toward the outcome we most desire.

An article published on the Internet by the University of Houston in 1995

(Behaviourism as a Learning Theory) suggested the following five stages to a behaviour change programme:

1. Set behaviour goals
2. Determine appropriate reinforcers
3. Select procedures for changing behaviour
4. Implement procedures and record results
5. Evaluate progress and revise as needed.

It may be of interest to note that Reinforcement Learning is currently an actively researched topic in artificial intelligence (AI).

Nurturing the exceptionally gifted child

What is giftedness? Or rather what meaning will I be giving it in the context of this article and with reference to children in school?

Well I made a note once of a definition that struck me as particularly good. It was: “Giftedness is that precious endowment of potentially outstanding abilities which allows a person to interact with the environment with remarkably high levels of achievement and creativity.”

I found that to be a very elegant statement. The only problem, in respect of this article, is that it applies particularly to the gifted adult and neglects to mention the specific problems faced by the gifted child who has not yet learned how to adapt to an environment that may sometimes seem less than benevolent.

A report by American educationalists in the 1970s produced a definition that was more appropriate to schoolchildren:

“Gifted and talented children identified by professionally qualified persons who by virtue of outstanding abilities are capable of high performance. These are children who require differentiated educational programmes and/or services beyond those normally provided by the regular school programme, in order to realize their contribution to self and society,”

The problem here is that our state schools, for a variety of reasons that I shall discuss later, are unlikely to have an abundance of “professionally qualified persons” capable of identifying the exceptionally talented children or, having identified them, lacking the time, wherewithal, opportunity or resources to provide “differentiated educational programmes.” And this is tragic, because giftedness, if it is to survive, needs nurturing.

The first issue that poses itself, regardless of which definition is chosen, is that of identification. How do we recognise gifted children? They are unlikely to sport a star on their chests. The characteristics that distinguish them from their less gifted peers tend to reveal themselves in the primary school classroom by a range of behaviours that will be obvious to any teacher taught to recognise them, but will often have been observed by parents, from age three onwards, and regarded as precocity. They are also determinedly curious and persistent in seeking to find answers to questions posed in quite different ways from those asked by less intellectually gifted children.

This pattern suggests that the most effective way forward, given the difficulties facing the educational establishment (at least in the UK), is by a collaboration between parents and teachers.

After all, parents have spent a considerable amount of time with their children for several years before they start school and are thus a ready-made source of information for the teachers on their children's pre-school behaviour. At the same time, by virtue of training in identifying and nurturing giftedness, teachers could be a valuable resource for parents in enabling them to deal with any anti-social tendencies at home that may result from the frustration of (apparently) being held back from their desired rate of progress at school. There are enormous advantages to both parents and teachers by pooling information and mapping progress throughout the school year

Generally, educationalists and parents have tended to focus attention and concern on those children who betray "problem" characteristics relating to learning difficulties and disorders. Conventionally the assumption has been that symptoms such as those associated with attention deficit and hyperactivity disorders inevitably derive from clinical causes, and this in turn frequently leads to misdiagnosis or over-diagnosis.

But it is not the intention of this article to deal with the causes and treatment of children suffering from ADD or ADHD. Rather it is the fact that until comparatively recently it was not recognised that similar behavioural difficulties might be the result of a child's inability to integrate into a classroom or group environment because of the child's exceptional intelligence. A child's inability to socialize with its peers or respond acceptably to discipline may derive simply from frustration at being forced to march to the slow tempo of the drumbeat of others. And this frustration regularly manifests itself in similar behaviour patterns to those of ADD.

Some of the commonly recognised characteristics that are to be found in children diagnosed as suffering from ADD or ADHD include^[1]

- Fidgeting in class or otherwise displaying restlessness.

- Being easily distracted.

- Having difficulty participating in group activities.

- Being impatient at having to wait for a turn.

- Losing interest in an activity and constantly changing to other activities.

- Talking loudly and excessively.

- Interrupting others in their speech or activities.

- Appears not to be paying attention to things that are being said.

- Often behaving rashly or impulsively.

Now compare that list with a list of behaviours associated with giftedness.^[2]

- Poor attention, boredom, daydreaming in specific situations.

- Low tolerance for persistence on tasks that seem irrelevant.

- Judgement lags behind development of intellect

- Intensity may lead to power struggles with authorities.

- Questions rules, customs and traditions.

There is clearly a considerable overlap between these two lists and it behoves both educationalists and parents to be aware of the need to avoid misdiagnosis

and to ensure that the gifted child is treated appropriately in order to remedy any tendency towards anti-social behaviour.

One way for parents to begin identifying their young gifted children (age 4 through 8) is to become aware of common characteristics they can observe at home.

Here is a list that many parents find useful: ^[3]

- Expresses curiosity about many things.

- Asks thoughtful questions.

- Has an extensive vocabulary and uses complex sentence structure.

- Is able to express him/herself well.

- Solves problems in unique ways

- Has a good memory.

- Exhibits unusual talent in art, music, or drama.

- Exhibits an especially original imagination.

- Uses previously learned data in new contexts.

- Is well able to order things in logical sequences.

- Discusses and elaborates on ideas.

- Is a fast learner.

- Works independently and uses initiative.

- Exhibits wit and humour.

- Has a sustained attention span or is willing to persist on challenging tasks.

- Is very observant.

- Shows talent in making up and telling stories.

- Is interested in reading.

It is also important to dispel various myths associated with gifted students, such as

- It is undemocratic to give special attention to the gifted.

- Gifted Students will do well on their own.

- Gifted students should strive to be part of the mainstream.

- Gifted students in special programs will have social-emotional problems.

^[1] Based on "Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders," Third Edition, Revised, Washington, DC, American Psychiatric Association, 1987.

^[2] Based on Webb, J. T. (1993). "Nurturing social-emotional development of gifted children." In K. A. Heller, F. J. Monks, and A. H. Passow (Eds.), "International Handbook for Research on Giftedness and Talent," pp. 525-538. Oxford: Pergamon Press.

^[3] Based on a report on the website of the National Association for Gifted Children (USA) <http://www.nagc.org/index.html>

Multiculturalism in our Schools

- a plea for a level playing field

Multicultural education - indeed, multiculturalism generally - means different things to different people. The term multicultural is frequently confused with, or used indiscriminately to mean, intercultural, cross-cultural, global, and multi-ethnic. So let me start by giving my definition - or, at least, the meaning that I will be giving to the term in this article.

In the field of education multiculturalism does not mean reducing all students to a common denominator regardless of their ethnic, racial or cultural backgrounds. It means giving each of them an equal opportunity to learn while acknowledging and respecting their differences and the different traditions from which they come, and incorporating all appropriate* differences into the classroom as a positive aid to education.

Multicultural education should not strive for homogeneity but co-equality and consistency of opportunity. Assumptions about homogeneity often underpin much of what happens in the classroom, but the importance of diversity needs to be acknowledged, regardless of any political pressures put on educators to regard diversity as a "dirty word".

The immigration explosion of recent years in most of the Western World countries has focused the attention of both politicians and educators on this issue to an extent hitherto unknown. It has been brought into sharper focus by the nature of the expanding immigrant groups, many of whom are deficient in the language of the country to which they are emigrating and have strong religious, racial and nationalistic ties to which they frequently cling ferociously. This is aggravated by the militant nature of some of these groups and their determination to resist - sometimes violently - any efforts to make them assimilate. If I may be permitted to misquote Dickens, when politicians face the threat of militant action it can concentrate their minds tremendously.

This "explosion" of diverse cultures, however, is simply an extension of a situation that has always existed, but not often recognised or treated. Multiculturalism has always existed in the classroom in one form or another. Schoolchildren have always come from a multiplicity of family backgrounds: the educational level of their parents; the economic circumstances of their home lives; their religions; their nationalities. What has brought the multicultural concern into such stark focus is little more, at base, than the greater ethnic visibility of the current cultural diversity in the schoolroom, and the differences in social conformity that the different backgrounds demand.

I would like to propound certain requirements for an inclusive multicultural syllabus.

1. The syllabus should incorporate cultural differences. It should not attempt to find an acceptable "common ground", but should acknowledge and seek to explain opposing ideas.
2. The treatment of all subjects should attempt to benefit from the diversity of experience and knowledge brought to the classroom by its disparate cultural elements.
3. Multicultural education is for all students, and all students should have equality of opportunity to achieve their full potential.
4. All students should be encouraged to participate constructively in an increasingly intercultural society.
5. Every student must be made aware of cultural differences as a heritage from a different time, a different place. They must be made to recognise that there is much to learn from the positive aspects of such differences while refraining from being scornful of those aspects which run counter to the values of their own culture.
6. Classrooms should become more student-centred with greater participation by the students. Not only the other students, but also the teachers, are able to learn from the experiences of students, if they are encouraged to give voice to them.
7. Multicultural education will not, of itself, cure the social problems arising from the efforts to integrate minority ethnic cultures into the majority culture, but the curriculum must address the reasons why these problems arise and persist.
8. There must be greater interaction between educators and parents and - acknowledging the vast difficulties that exist in this area - every effort made for parents to understand what is being attempted in a multicultural classroom, and to appreciate that no attempt is being made to undermine family values. This is most important with very young children.
9. The social conventions of minority ethnic groups have to be understood by the teachers and explained to the students. A good example is the case with the rules of conversation. In some cultures it is considered unacceptable for a young person to question his or her elders. In the classroom this may translate itself into a refusal to interact with a teacher and a consequent failure to understand something that is being taught. This may be an opportunity for the teacher to involve classmates in their independent interaction and for students to explain to each other the types of convention that applies in their group.

The problems facing multicultural education will not go away. They resemble the poor and taxes. Indeed, they may be expected to increase. The time to address the issues raised is now, and it is important that all areas affected be involved in decisions: this means the politicians, the educators, the students and - above all - the parents and the authority figures of their own culture. The overriding need is to prepare children to participate effectively in a formal educational environment while demonstrating respect for cultural differences.

This should be the same for all.

* This may seem to beg the question. What I mean by “appropriate” are those aspects of a culture that are positive and not negative; that celebrate their own perspectives while not denigrating those of others; from which all can learn to live in harmony rather than discord.

Health and Therapy

Health and Therapy

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By giving an illness a name we run the risk
of treating the symptom rather than the cause

Stay flexible. Become too rigid
and you lose your holisticity

The Nocebo Effect

The Nocebo Effect (or Nocebo Phenomenon as it is also termed) came vividly to public attention in the last decade of the 1990s. Medical research revealed that women who believed they had a tendency to heart disease were nearly four times as likely to die as women with similar risk factors who didn't hold such negative views.

In 2002, psychiatrist A.J. Barsky wrote^[1] “They’re convinced that something is going to go wrong, and it’s a self-fulfilling prophecy.” Four years earlier, Robert & Michele Root-Bernstein had written: “*Research has . . . shown that the nocebo effect can reverse the body’s response to true medical treatment from positive to negative*”^[2]

In a similar way to which Placebo derives from the Latin for “I will heal”, Nocebo is Latin for “I will harm”. Thus a nocebo effect is an ill effect caused by the suggestion or belief that something is harmful.

Dr Barsky (*op cit.*) speculated that the effect occurs when people reassign existing chronic symptoms, such as anxiety, backache, headaches and insomnia to the drug they have just begun taking. He suggests that when a patient with a history of vague, difficult-to-diagnose complaints believes that any prescribed drug will do little to help, those low expectations are inevitably met.

The nocebo effect has been described as the placebo effect’s evil twin. While the placebo effect refers to health benefits produced by a treatment that should have no effect, patients experiencing the nocebo effect experience the opposite. They presume the worst, health-wise, and that’s just what they get.

There have been some interesting experiments conducted over the years to demonstrate the power of the nocebo effect. Inevitably medical research has been less profound than into the placebo effect, since medical practitioners have an ethical obligation to cure their patients and not to induce illness in them.

In one experiment, college students were told that an electric current would be passed through their heads and that this might cause a headache. Although not a single volt of electricity was actually transmitted, more than two-thirds of the students reported headaches.

In another experiment in the 1980s, researchers at three separate medical centres conducted a study of aspirin and another blood thinner in heart patients and made an astonishing discovery. In two of the centres patients were warned of possible gastrointestinal problems. At the third location, no such caution was issued. When the data was reviewed it revealed that the patients who had received the warning were almost three times more likely to have the side effect than the other patients.

Although the actual incidence of stomach damage, such as ulcers, was the same for all three groups, those who had been warned about the possibility of minor discomfort were the ones most likely to experience the pain.

And in a study published long before the word *nocebo* had been coined, it was demonstrated that producing an artificial rose to a patient allergic to the plant resulted in a display of the same symptoms as would have been produced by the genuine flower.

Perhaps the most bizarre of all the experiments was that conducted with a group of asthmatic patients. They inhaled a vapour that they believed to be a chemical irritant or allergen. Nearly half of the patients experienced breathing problems with several developing full-blown attacks. They were then “treated” with a substance they believed to be a bronchodilating medicine and recovered immediately. In fact, both the irritant and the medicine were the same substance: a nebulized salt water solution. Both the attack and the cure resulted from the patients’ expectations.

Analysis of experiments conducted over the years, and examination of the symptoms displayed by *nocebo*-effect patients, has resulted in several telling conclusions and points the way ahead for further study.

For example: the behaviour of physicians and hospital staff, the colours that are worn, or the ambience in which tests and treatment are conducted, all can have an effect on the patients’ mental state. This effect can be positive or negative - a placebo or a *nocebo* - depending on and influencing the patients’ reactions. Many patients, for example, react badly when confronted by medical practitioners dressed in white. It has even been called “white-coat hypertension”. Green, however, has been found to have a calming effect. A Dutch study found that most people considered red and orange pills to be stimulating, with blue and green pills more likely to have a depressant effect.

It was ascertained that when anaesthetists visited patients the night before surgery and were warm, chatty and sympathetic, the patients subsequently required half the postoperative pain medication than those whose anaesthetists were peremptory and businesslike. They were also released from hospital on average two and a half days earlier.

A book published some years ago, reviewed by me for another journal, was entitled *Think Yourself Healthy*. It was concerned with the benefit to health of positive thinking. It was published before the *nocebo* effect *per se* was officially recognised, but inevitably, the consideration of positive energy on physical health acknowledged the corollary of *Think sick - be sick*. Think the worst and you may just end up getting it.

^[1]Department of Psychiatry, Brigham and Women’s Hospital, Maryland, USA, writing in the Journal of the American Medical Association, February 2002 on *Nonspecific medication side effects and the nocebo phenomenon*.

^[2]*Honey, Mud, Maggots and Other Medical Marvels: The Science Behind Folk Remedies and Old Wives’ Tales* (Houghton Mifflin Co., 1998).

Handling My Chronic Distress Patterns

In the days when I co-counselled regularly one of my major concerns with the technique and practise of the activity was based on the observation that practitioners seemed regularly to discharge the same material; frequently they fell into a pattern involving the use of the same words, body language and behaviour, and often re-evaluated the experience in the same or a similar way.

This used to bother me, because if I wanted to regard co-counselling as a self-help therapy, I believed that – to justify the title – it should demonstrate a reasonably lasting therapeutic effect.

Subsequent exposure to other forms of self-help (and even guided) therapy revealed that this chronic behaviour pattern was not unique to co-counselling; this was not particularly reassuring. Nor was the recognition that I was not alone in my concern and that a body of thought in the co-counselling community – and outside – was dedicated to tackling this apparent paradox.

Most systems of self-help (whether aided or not) are based on the interruption of patterns of thought or behaviour. When I interrupt the pattern, I am freeing myself for discharge. But the act of discharge is taking place in present time; my hurt is being arrested in present time; my past distress is being neutralised . . . in present time. Unless I can find a way of avoiding a recurrence of the distress pattern, I am condemned continually to discharge it. I need a formula that will enable me to recognise the pattern in the first place, and to identify what it is that triggers it off.

My personal system of handling the problem has been to combine the techniques of co-counselling with the therapeutic methods of other disciplines. I don't know how successful this has been, even though I'm quite happy with the results. Perhaps it is for others to determine. But I retain the conviction that the marriage of theory such as that of NLP or TA, the therapeutic methods of, say, yoga or attitudinal healing, with the techniques of co-counselling or gestalt must have more merit than mere repetition of patterns of discharge and/or celebration. My methods involve the use of *targetting*, *goal-setting*, *action planning*, and *reprogramming*.

Our patterns result from our programming. We can choose to sink in them or try to overcome them. I don't know of a single self-help therapy which does not place emphasis on choice. "Try contradicting that remark," is a standard co-counselling intervention. In other words, try *choosing* the opposite.

So what happens when I direct my targetting towards the exercise of choice? Let's face it, the only thing I can be sure of changing is my internal experience. I can't change what others are doing, I can only change my perception of what they are doing *to me*! This involves the exercise of choice. I can choose to feel

that I am being harmed, or I can choose to feel that what someone else is doing, they are doing to themselves, not to me. Only *I* can do something to *me*.

The value of my choice process is that I can acknowledge all the ways I can achieve my intentions and choose which way will bring it about. I can thus free myself from my dependence upon my demands being satisfied in order to feel secure, or happy, or at peace.

My action planning consists of establishing my requirements. What are my aims? How will I know when I have attained them? What might I try to do to sabotage? How can I modify them with the exercise of choice? Can I choose different aims? Can I choose to re-evaluate my aims and revalidate myself?

Finally reprogramming. I can look at what I am demanding and recognise that I do not need it – that I already have all I need. I can change my demands in such a way that they can be easily satisfied. I can decide what it is I want to do, how I want to appear to myself, how I want to react to others, how I want to interact with them. I can develop ways in which to feel relaxed: by learning yoga techniques, by deep breathing to rid myself of tension, by teaching myself relaxation techniques, by reprogramming my reactions.

I can learn to ask for what I want rather than remain in fear of what I might be offered. I can choose to ignore those things about myself, others, or situations, which currently snarl me up, immobilise me, feed my addictions, reinforce my distress patterns.

I can choose what I want.

I can choose to be me.



Illustration from *An ABC of NLP* by Joseph Sinclair,
best viewed in the context of the following article.

Here's Looking at You

“ A mirror should reflect a bit, before casting images.”

- Carl Rogers

Browsing some sources on the Internet, I came across an interesting article by an unknown [*sic*] author on the subject of “reflection”. It was on the excellent website of free resources provided by Elements UK.

The article began: “If the assumption is correct, that counsellor responses greatly influence both the dynamics of an interview and the client himself, then we should look for a way of responding which will lead to more complete self expression and a more explicit statement on the part of the client. What is needed is a way of responding which affirms the client, conveys a warm attitude, manifests respect for client meanings and experience, facilitates communication and impels the client’s further self exploration whilst at the same time increasing the counsellor’s understanding. This way of responding is reflection.”

I wondered why my memory was being jogged and, for a time, couldn’t pin down the precise derivation of the “jog”. Then it came to me. It was a dispute within the London Co-Counselling Community, at the time that NLP was making rapid inroads into the (then) current approaches to counselling and psychotherapy. A number of members were convinced that the background of hypnotherapy with its tendency towards manipulation, which formed a large part of the structure of NLP, meant that its use in co-counselling could violate the major tenet of that discipline: namely that “client is in charge”.

Happily (at least for devotees of Neuro Linguistic Programming) these objections were ultimately stilled and the “checks and balances” that have traditionally been incorporated into co-counselling were able to deal with any propensity by the counsellor to influence the work of the client.

Indeed, many of the NLP techniques were found to be of immense value when allied to the techniques of co-counselling. In particular the recognition of where “client is coming from” by the interpretation of speech patterns, body language, and eye movements. These enabled the practitioner in counsellor role to adopt more useful interventions in assisting the client to achieve the goal of discharge or celebration.^[1]

Let us, for a moment, revert to the article by the unknown author.

“Apart from the ‘echo response’ which offers no evidence of trying to understand the client’s world, (echoing is an impersonal procedure and research evidence suggests that it is the effort to understand which is effective, not an imitation of it.) reflection consists of repeating in other words, and more concisely and explicitly, what the client has just said, and doing this in such a way that it wins the client’s agreement. Such ‘repeating in other words’ opens up possibilities in terms of

types or degrees of reflection. Just as one counsellor's reflection may be a sensitive reformulation whilst another response to the same client and material may be an indulgence in cliché, so the individual counsellor may manifest degrees of client world understanding by the nature of his reflective response.”^[2]

This resonated even more with both co-counselling and NLP practices. Reflection is, after all, a synonym for what NLP practitioners call “mirroring”. And “repeating in other words” is specifically the sort of injunction applied by counsellors in co-counselling. “Try contradicting that statement”, they might say. Or “try putting that another way,” or “louder”.

In co-counselling the basic contract is for counsellors to maintain simple eye contact; to give total attention to the client, but to express no feelings of their own. One stage up, the normal contract will permit the co-counsellor some participation in the way of prescribed interventions. It is only in the full contract, that counsellor is permitted to reflect back, to the client, the client's own feelings and patterns of speech and behaviour. This technique was greatly improved by the NLP prescriptions of mirroring, matching, mismatching, pacing, etc. Now co-counselling practice could be expanded by these specific techniques as and when each was most appropriate. And judging the appropriateness of each would be a mark of the co-counsellor's expertise.

Back once more to our unknown author:

[Responses would include] “Paraphrasing - using words considered equivalent in the client's terms. Summarising - using equivalent words but expressing what is essential for the client from the client's point of view.

“Both of the above prove that attention is focused on the client. They are also objective reflections as in a mirror. What the client has said from his own experience comes back to him from outside and he is forced (if the reflection is good) to recognise himself in it. This produces a reactive response which heightens self awareness. At the same time he is assured of being heard with understanding.”^[3]

One of the aims of Co-Counselling is to be able to discard patterns of behaviour that are not useful, that are outmoded, that restrict spiritual, emotional, and/or intellectual growth. Another aim is to recognise and reject limiting beliefs that stop us from achieving our desired outcomes. A further aim is to gain confidence, identify and discard patterns of negativity, and achieve “OK-ness”. These aims are clearly difficult to attain if we are unable to identify the patterns and layers of material that keeps us stuck in our state of negativity; the drivers and injunctions that put us there and hold us in thrall. The beauty of the reflective technique is that, by bringing us face to face with our own patterns of behaviour, as viewed in a mirror, we may become aware of influences we tend to hid from ourselves.

In an article in NLP's Rapport magazine,^[4] Philip Harland writes:

“‘Reflective questioning’ is a use of language that respects one of our fundamental freedoms - the right to make our own mistakes. It neither interprets nor seeks to replace a person’s meaning or belief, but rather aims to highlight it. David Grove’s ‘clean language’, as used in metaphor therapy, is an excellent example.”

A final few words extracted from the Reflections article:

“Should the impression have been gained that ‘reflection’ is a multi-faceted technique to be applied to the client then the importance of listening to affect cannot be overemphasised. It is here that for example latent meanings may be heard and it should be remembered that empathy is much more concerned with emotional climate than it is with the use of techniques . . .

. . . “Finally in order to minimise client feelings of threat, attention must be paid to how (e.g. tone of voice, body language) such responses are made. The how of saying must be appropriate to the what is said. Whilst advanced empathic responding may help the client to explore more intimate, personally relevant and emotionally threatening areas of experiences, inaccurate, clumsy or badly timed responses can do more harm than good. Be tentative rather than authoritarian.”

REFERENCES:

[1] This is also covered in the previous article “Handling my Chronic Distress Patterns”.

[2] There’s a very useful echo technique that helps to build rapport, and that is simply to repeat back to the client the last few words they have spoken. If tone and tempo can match as well as words, this is even more effective. It certainly beats the hell out of “Uhuh”, or “Ummm”. In fact it could even be used with someone speaking an unfamiliar foreign language. One of the things we were taught in our co-counselling fundamentals course was that an effective basic session could be enjoyed by two people speaking different languages with which they were each unfamiliar. I can’t recall the technique of echoing back the last phrase being mentioned, but my guess is that it would have been very successful.

[3] If you would like to see the complete Reflections article, you can access it at: <http://www.elementsuk.com/downloads/reflection.rtf>

[4] Rapport, Issue 42, Winter 1998. The reference was obtained from James Lawley’s and Penny Tompkins’ excellent website resource <http://www.devco.demon.co.uk> where the entire article - and many more - will be found.

Which is the Authentic Me?

There are many paths up the mountain, and there are many guides for each path; and they all speak different languages. All the paths inevitably lead to the same place; each guide has his/her own prescription for a safe journey; and, although their languages differ, their messages remain the same.

Freud or Skinner

My guide may be an intellectual guide: Freud for example. He will lead me up my particular mountain using my concept of myself as his yardstick. When I am walking along my intellectual path, my preoccupation is with goals and structure. I can spend my time analysing my life, and can thus avoid living it, feeling it. I am obsessed by “shoulds” and “oughts”; and society approves of me because I am displaying a state which society regards as desirable and “normal”. [*Society is, of course, an abstract concept, a nominalization – and in this context refers to friends, family, colleagues and those people with whom I enjoy “normal” intercourse of every kind.*]

Alternatively I might have a behavioural guide, a Skinner, leading me up the path of rewards and punishments. My worth is equated with my behaviour. If I behave *badly*, or am judged *badly*, I will be punished, I will suffer loss, perhaps losing status, perhaps being victimized. Any gains I enjoy I will attribute to “correct” behaviour.

Rogers or Berne

Another guide might be a Carl Rogers, directing my footsteps along the path of *feeling*. If I feel happy, I am happy. Where the path ultimately leads is less relevant than the experience of taking it. By focusing on feeling, I can cure the whole me, not merely the complaint. Feeling is the essence of life.

And there are many other guides, and many disciples of those guides, all with their labels and descriptions for what, at the end of the day, will be the same mountain peak. The humanistic, holistic psychologists who urge me to find my authentic self. Eric Berne and his adherents, whose concern is for my OK-ness. The No-Erroneous-Zone target of Dr Wayne Dyer. Ken Keyes, who will direct me off the path of addiction onto the patch of self-actualization. Jerry Jampolski, who will take me along the path of love and forgiveness. And so on, and so on.

But whichever of these guides I take, there are aspects of myself I need to discover and to recognise before I can access the authenticity that all these gurus recommend.

I will never access my authentic self until I am able to resolve the conflict between *Id* and *Superego* in favour of *Id*; before I discard my Critical Parent and free up my Adapted Child; before I recognise that it's not what I *should* do that is relevant to this journey, but what I *want* to do.

I will want to stop playing games; I will want to nurture my true self, rather than the image of myself which I present to others. I will want to be honest with myself without suffering the anguish of hurt and sadness that comes from admitting bad feelings about myself. I will want to divest myself of my anxieties, my addictions to ingrained behaviour patterns, the ways in which I immobilize myself. I will wish to turn my feelings outwards and not direct my energy inwards. I will want to explode into life – not merely in Perls's four ways of joy, grief, orgasm and anger, but in countless other ways. Mostly I will want to learn how to give love and trust.

The pool of love

Giving love is like bathing in a pool: I cannot give love unless I step into the pool and then I am immediately bathed in the universal love which is the water of the pool. Receiving love does not diminish the water in the pool; it merely leaves space for love which is continuously being proffered. I do not have to feel discomfort at accepting gifts, and particularly the gift of love, since my acceptance leaves room for others to donate and receive.

In the past I tended to collapse into my emotions. I suffered intolerably. Or – with the benefit of new-found wisdom – I caused myself unnecessary suffering which I ascribed to others whose intent was merely to deal with their own needs.

Trust starts with myself

If I trust myself and my emotions, if I allow my feelings to well from a lack of deviousness and device, if I can give and accept love, then I can give myself without fear that I may suffer from the problems, needs, desires and wishes of others. If I am aware of my tendency to introject, and recognise that I am doing neither myself nor others a favour when I indulge this behaviour, then I can offer myself freely, without experiencing the pain and suffering of others as my pain and suffering. My trust and my love will thus validate their authenticity. My acceptance of their authenticity will inevitably validate my own.

Fatness or Fitness

There is nothing new in any of the information I shall be providing in this article. Nothing new, nothing sensational, nothing that you don't already know.

I simply hope that by writing it in a different style from other articles you will have read, it may make more impact, induce greater resolve, and produce more beneficial results.

Let's start with a few facts and statistics.

Recent studies in the United Kingdom purport to show that obesity has increased tremendously during the past two decades, to the state where the UK now has the highest ratio of obesity to population in Europe; and the group most at risk would appear to be children of school age. Apparently health concerns have taken a minor role compared to watching TV with a junk food meal in ones lap.

The studies indicated a direct correlation between hours of TV watched and a child's body fat. Combining proper exercise with a healthy diet is the key to a healthy lifestyle - for children and for adults. By understanding what exercises burn fat and teaching your child how to exercise safely, you can instill healthy habits that will last a lifetime. But it's important to set an example to your child and to act as a role model.

The situation is paralleled in the United States where obesity is almost reaching the dimensions of an epidemic. One out of three Americans is reported as being overweight. Furthermore, recent studies in the USA have revealed that 90 per cent of Americans do too little exercise to receive any measurable benefit from it. Given the emphasis on sports in that country, it would seem that most people prefer the role of spectator to that of participant.

Now, although appropriate exercise performed regularly will not only improve health and fitness, but will tone muscles (the loss of which is a side effect of dieting, since 25 percent of the weight loss in dieting is muscle tissue), and although the benefits of exercise are well known and widely advertised, overweight people mainly prefer to lose weight by dieting rather than by exercise. The most effective regime for the overweight individual, however, is one that combines dietary care with regular and not too rigorous exercise.

One of the reasons why some people do not persevere with a combined diet and exercise regime, but go instead for a "crash" diet, is that while a diet will produce a relatively quick loss of fat weight, exercise will produce an increase in muscle weight. Of course, the latter is healthy, but it can be quite discouraging to find, at the end of a week's dieting, that you have lost a mere one or two pounds, because you have dropped 6 pounds in fat, but gained 4 pounds in muscle weight. So the apparently easy course is to simply diet and shed those extra pounds quickly. Inevitably, however, any speedy weight loss is as quickly regained.

But whether you diet, or exercise, or diet and exercise, there are options to be considered. Some diets may be more appropriate to your situation than others; some exercises may suit you better and be more beneficial than others.

DIETING



Illustration by Yaron Livay ^{III}

As far as diets are concerned the first cautionary note is: avoid all so-called “wonder” diets. Any drastic change in eating habits is likely to cause an almost immediate loss of weight. But the loss is rarely maintained and the weight is quickly regained, sometimes even exceeding the amount lost. The best diet is the one that can be sustained without leaving the dieter with a feeling of deprivation. And sensible diets - inevitably they are the ones that have stood the test of time - fall into three categories.

[Incidentally, all respectable dietary guides start with the caveat that the prospective dieters are advised to consult their medical practitioner before embarking on a prolonged diet. And this is advice that I certainly echo.]

1. Controlled calorie diets. These are generally regarded as the safest because they do not exaggerate the intake or exclusion of any specific food groups, but work on balanced meals with reduced calories. They are not as “jazzy” as some of the others diets, and dieters may consider them to be rather boring. Nonetheless they work, they do not depend upon deprivation of any essential nutritional elements, and they are not “gimmicky”.

2. High protein and low (or no) carbohydrate diets. These can produce startlingly effective results in a very short time and some of them are easily maintained. The first and best-known was probably the Scarsdale diet, subsequently modified and re-presented as the Dr. Atkins Diet. There is a lot to be said for these diets, but there are dangers too. A very considerable intake of water is essential if

body nutrients and chemicals are not to be disturbed, as well as to counter some of the unpleasant side effects of this type of diet, such as bad breath. Water (any liquid indeed) is essential regardless of specific dietary benefits, but recent research has revealed that too much liquid intake can also be harmful.

3. High fibre diets. A major benefit of this type of diet is that a lack of fibre in the body has been linked to various diseases such as bowel cancer and varicose veins. The beneficial side-effect is that increasing fibre intake and reducing fats and sugars means that there is a reduction in calorie ingestion which will result in weight loss. Too much fibre, however, can deplete certain of the body's vitamins.

EXERCISING

Just as a diet, if it is to be successful, has to be sustainable, so exercise that accompanies a diet should not be so onerous or rigorous that overweight individuals find it burdensome or boring.

There are many gentle forms of exercise that may be undertaken by people who lack fitness, that are capable of being maintained at a fairly relaxed level at least until the practitioner's improved energy and reduced weight makes it safe to move to a higher level. And many of them are very enjoyable activities.

The least energetic, and most easily adopted is simply to exercise while sitting down. An example that I read some time ago, and took the precaution of committing to my notebook, proposed "shadow boxing" while seated. It suggested throwing a few punches in the air. "Throw a left, another left and follow with a right, left right. Throw a flurry of mixed punches. Throw some punches to the side. Your head automatically bobs around while throwing the punches, giving your neck a workout as well."

Of course, this is not something you will feel comfortable doing while seated at your office desk in the presence of others. But even there it is possible to practice isometric exercises such as the "chair lift", the "behind neck pull", the "forward lean", the "ankle press", and the "overhead pull". Each of these exercises is performed while seated and involves merely four seconds of increased pressure for each exercise, followed by six seconds of sustained pressure.

Isometric exercises are those in which a force is applied to a resistant object. It could be an imaginary object. But to give an example: in the chair lift, the seat of the chair in which you are sitting is held with a hand on either side and you try to lift yourself and the chair off the ground. Pressure is increased for four seconds and then maintained for six seconds. The same technique is used with the other exercises: the behind neck pull has the hands behind the neck with fingers interlaced, head pushing back against hands; the overhead pull has hands joined and interlocked above the head; the forward lean has legs extended and feet about 30 cm above the floor, hands pressing on thighs; the ankle press has legs extended and ankles crossed, the pressure is by each ankle attempting to push the other ankle up, or down as the case may be.^[2]

A word of warning. Isometric exercises when performed in a serious manner are really intended for people who are already fit. The exercises mentioned above, when used simply to achieve an increase in physical fitness to accompany a diet, should be performed fairly gently initially. They should not be undertaken strenuously without first getting a professional medical opinion.

Far better for gentle exercising are four other activities.

1. Dancing

There are many forms of dancing, ranging from the sedate to the frenetic, and you can have a lot of fun simply trying them all out. Whichever you do, you can be sure that you will be indulging in a keep-fit activity that will help you to burn off the calories, albeit not that many if your taste runs only to the gently elegant. So, be it disco, folk, circle, country, formation or ballroom, do it regularly, enjoy yourself, and trim that fat.

2. Swimming

The main advantage of swimming as an adjunct to dieting is that it is one of the most effective ways of exercising the muscles, lungs and heart without the strain that is sometimes associated with other forms of exercise. For this reason it is probably the top recommendation of all medical practitioners for their patients of whatever age. And there are few people who do not live within reasonable access of a swimming pool.

3. Cycling

Forget about that stationary piece of equipment that was used with enthusiasm when it was first purchased and now lurks in the corner of the bedroom, or the bathroom, or the garage floor, quietly rustivating if not rusting.

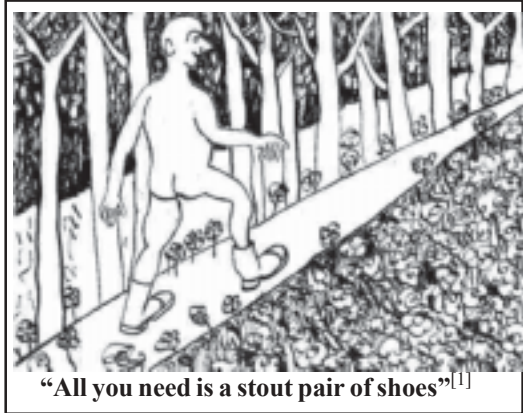
Much better for a whole variety of reasons is a real, live tourer, mountain or sports bicycle that will promote good health, endurance, muscle activity, and coordination. It will also save you money when used as an alternative to a car or public transport, and it is ecologically sound. Get to know your local area, find ways of avoiding roads, and discover local cycle paths and footpaths that permit use by cyclists.

4. Walking

In *Peace of Mind is a Piece of Cake* ^[1], the authors write: “. . . what can you do that’s cheap, available and requires little or no preparation? The answer is: walk! Walk your way to fitness! Walk away from stress! All you need is a good pair of shoes.

“This does not mean a five minute stroll to the newsagents. Or ten minutes walking around the aisles of your local supermarket . . . Walking, to do any real good, should be at a pace which will raise the pulse rate, exercise the lungs, and burn off the calories, and this means walking at a speed of at least 5 km per hour. Walk at the right speed, step out energetically, swing your arms, and you will exercise most of the muscles of your body.

“The next time you are about to get into your car, ask yourself ‘Can I walk there?’ If not, perhaps you can park your car a mile or two from your destination and walk that mile or two. . . Do it often enough and - who knows? - you may end up enjoying it, even looking forward to it, and maybe planning longer walks when you don’t have a specific destination.”



SOURCES:

[1] *Peace of Mind is a Piece of Cake* by Michael Mallows and Joe Sinclair, Crown Publishing, 1998

[2] *Isometrics* by Henry Wittenberg, Award Books, 1973.

The Complete Book of Good Health, Copp Clark Publishing, 1978.

Rating the Diets by Theodore Berland and the editors of Consumer Guide, Crown Publishers Inc. 1980

The Eyes Have It

It was 1946. Not long after the end of World War II. We had removed, as Regent Polytechnic Secondary School (later renamed the Quintin School) from the main Polytechnic building in Regent Street, to a small primary school premises in the wilds of Soho.

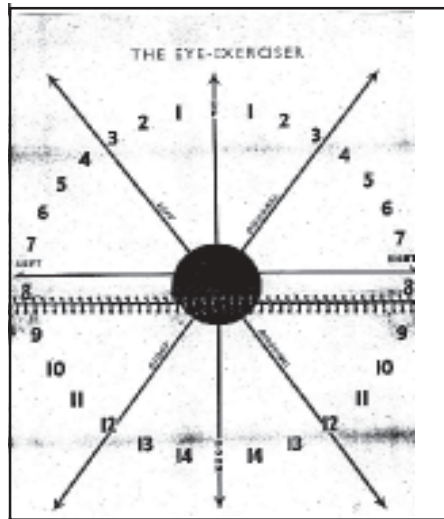
There was a general inspection of everyone's eyes at the school. I was dismayed to discover that my eyesight was far from perfect and, after a series of tests, I was diagnosed myopic and prescribed spectacles. I wore them reluctantly, refusing to admit (despite all evidence to the contrary) that my vision was improved by their use.

Some months later, by a process that I now know to be synchronicity - but in those days naively assumed it to be coincidence (!) - I was taking a post-prandial stroll before afternoon classes in the somewhat seamy atmosphere of Berwick Street market and stopped to browse the books on a bookstall. The title *Better Eyes Without Glasses* caught my un-bespectacled gaze. (See! Knew I didn't need specs!) It was, however, white on black in about size 28 point. Also it only cost a tanner^[*]. So I bought it.

Written by an American dietician named Gayelord Hauser and published in 1941, it was concerned initially with nutritional benefits to eyesight and I thought that I would, maybe, try some of the author's suggestions. But reading further into the book it described the work in the area of sight therapy by Dr. William Bates and gave examples of some very simple exercises that Hauser claimed to have highly beneficial effects. It seemed easier to try the exercises than to change my diet - which would have involved selling my mother on the advantages of such a change!

There were five major exercises and some additional suggestions. The most important of all Hauser's suggestions, it seemed to me, was to blink rapidly and frequently. Recalling that advice and my determination to follow it makes me wonder what observers must have thought of me, with my eyelids continuously popping up and down. Ultimately, of course, I learned discretion and used the device only when alone and relaxed. I found that it was very helpful while studying, to stop from time to time and have a mini-blinking session. It also seemed to "clear the cobwebs".

The most praised of the exercises was palming. I discovered that this too had a remarkably relaxing effect, especially when I had been reading for a prolonged period. In addition to the palming and the blinking, I also (usually in the mornings before school and the evenings before bed) practised swinging, neck-circling, and the use of the eye-exerciser (see diagram below) which, after a while, I no longer needed as a visual aid, but could practise from memory.



The eye-exerciser (in its original form it is about the size of a quarto sheet of paper) should be held about four inches from the nose, with the nose in line with the centre spot. Holding the head perfectly still, the eyes should follow the up and down arrows 10 to 15 times, then follow the left and right arrows similarly, and finally repeating the process with the right diagonal and the left diagonal arrows. Finally a complete circle clockwise, blinking at each number, and a repetition anti-clockwise.

When practising eye exercising myself, without the use of the chart, I developed my own system of trying to envisage myself looking at the top of my head, at my feet, and at the back of my head - without moving my head. I discovered that this “impossible” act nevertheless had the effect of making me stretch the eye muscles more than I might otherwise have done.

I stopped using my spectacles when I started the exercise routine. Three months later I threw them into a drawer and haven’t used them since. Correction: I used them once more. Eighteen months later I was conscripted to National Service. As Army recruits we had to have our eyes tested for spectacles that would fit inside a gas mask. I was asked to bring my spectacles to the test. It was discovered that the myopia for which they had been prescribed had all but vanished. My eyesight was not perfect, but did not require any prosthetic assistance.

I have not worn spectacles since, but I’m pretty sure that, without the aid of Bates and his disciple Hauser, my prescription spectacles would have been increased in power from year to year until I had become totally dependent upon them.

[*] Six old pence!

Doing What Comes Naturally

I'm not a great believer in natural remedies. I'm not a sceptic either. I suppose pragmatist would be the best word to describe my attitude to "notions, potions and nostrums". If it works, don't knock it.

Okay, so that makes me a sucker for placebos. But if my health has been improved, then I'm going to be too happy to be worried about a denigratory label.

In fact, despite what I said above, I reckon I must be something of a sceptic, because it usually takes forever to convince me of the efficacy of a new approach to a problem. So, while I recognise that a successful treatment is no guarantee that it would be universally or permanently successful (even my belief in the Bates Eye Therapy that has served me well for sixty years, and the efficacy of the daily intake of Kefir that has nourished me for half that time) I'm prepared to give the benefit of any doubt others may have to any remedy that has worked for me.

I can think of two: treating the symptoms of headaches and arthritis.

HEADACHES

A slew of years ago, while studying transactional analysis under the tutorship of the late Vivienne Gill, she was concerned about the discomfort of one of the class who announced that she was suffering from a headache. Vivienne then described her method of dealing with this condition.

She had us close our eyes and visualise a spot in the head where the pain was located. Of course, apart from the sufferer, the rest of us were simply using our imaginations. Having located a spot, we then had to visualise it in some shape or form. I believe her own device was a walnut. I chose to visualise a sugar lump. We then had to imagine ourselves compressing the shape, squeezing it mentally, until it became really small, then moving it across our heads until we could squeeze it out of an ear.

The member of the class for whom this exercise was adopted then announced gleefully that her headache had vanished.

The next time I had a headache, I adopted this method, again using a cube of sugar to represent the pain and, in the space of about five minutes, I had cured the headache. I have never since suffered from a severe headache. Immediately I feel the onset of a pain in my head, I think of a lump of sugar and the pain disappears.

This is a pretty standard type of tactic in NLP and it is no surprise that Vivienne subsequently went on to become a Master Practitioner and to teach NLP in place of TA. Her loss to cancer at what was still an early age was deeply felt by me, but her formula for dealing with headaches has ensured that she is unlikely ever to depart from my memory.



Illustration by Yaron Livay

ARTHRITIS

It came from a book on Natural Remedies that I acquired at a charity shop. It had some enthralling accounts of remedies from the past; remedies that have fallen into disuse; remedies that have been forgotten or overtaken by modern methods of treatment.

I had started suffering badly from arthritic nodules; first one thumb, then the other; and, at the time I bought the book, they were spreading to the index fingers. I was doing a lot of walking with the Cleveland Ramblers and every time one of my hands swung against my leg, the pain was excruciating. I had tried all the remedies recommended by well-wishing friends, to no effect. I had tried pills prescribed by the doctor. Zilch.

What could I lose in following the advice given in the book? It suggested heavy doses of calcium. This was not new. It had been suggested by friends and the doctor. But the author added another ingredient. She said that, in order to frustrate the possible build-up of calcium in the bones or the joints, it was necessary to take acid, and she recommended cider vinegar. So, three times a day I took a heavy dose of calcium in tablet form and a dessert-spoonful of cider vinegar. And within a fortnight the arthritic nodules had halved in size.

The only problem I had was that I hated taking the cider vinegar. It occurred to me that any acid might serve the same purpose, and since Vitamin C is effectively ascorbic acid, I started taking a megadose of Vitamin C with each Calcium tablet. The improvement in my hands continued apace. And I enjoyed the added advantage of whatever benefits were provided by the vitamin C tablets. I have since reduced the quantities and the nodules are no longer there.

Okay, so what if it was simply a placebo effect?

It has worked, hasn't it?

Language and Communication

Language and Communication

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If we listen too hard, we are liable
to hear our own thoughts

Now that I've discarded expectorations,
spats are a thing of the past,
he said phlegmatically

Language - The Two-Edged Sword

“Language is apparently a sword which cuts both ways. With its help man can conquer the unknown; with it he can grievously wound himself.”⁽¹⁾



Language is the name we give to the vehicle we use for communicating ideas. We encode perceptual phenomena into awareness which is manipulated by the mind in order to make sense out of experience. Features of this awareness are objectified and associated with sounds. When these sounds are uttered and become the recognised sounds for the objectified phenomena they are referred to as words.

There are, however, two major problems. One is a tendency to identify the words with the object they represent. The other is the failure correctly to identify abstractions. In the first case it is useful to employ a word coined the best part of a century ago to distinguish labels for objects (i.e. words) from the objects themselves. For example, we may call a certain animal a “dog”. This is the label we give to a four-legged creature, usually with a tail, that enables that creature to be identified. The word, though, is not the animal. If, however, we term the dog itself a “referent”, this distinguishes the animal as a physical entity, as distinct from the label used to describe it.

Language is, capable of both enhancing and limiting our perception of the world; for example, “Eskimos have some seventy different words for snow”⁽²⁾; and much language, particularly of the more primitive kind, is not primarily concerned with ideas at all.

But while it is a simple matter to identify the referent when the label “dog” is used, even though we may not all imagine the same breed of dog, it is somewhat more complicated to apply a similar simplification to an abstract idea.

“No matter what names you humans give to things [said Josie the chimpanzee], we chimpanzees go right on enjoying life. It isn’t so with humans . . . The names you uncaged primates give things affect your attitude towards them forever after. You lose your insight because you are always holding up a screen of language between you and the real world.”⁽³⁾

Stuart Chase⁽¹⁾ has divided labels into three classes, in ascending order of difficulty:

1. Labels for common objects such as dogs (or chairs, or books).
2. Labels for collections of things such as “mankind”, “consumer goods”, Germany, “the white race”, “the courts”.
3. Labels for abstract ideas and qualities, such as “freedom”, “individualism”, “truth”, “the sublime”.

Noam Chomsky, in his first book⁽⁴⁾, outlined his system of transformational grammar. This grammar consists of surface structures - the sounds and words in a sentence - and deep structures that contain the meaning of the sentence. The meaning is converted by a transformation - any of an ordered set of rules - to a surface structure. In other words, everyday language is the surface structure of a communication, whereas it is the deep structure that is filtered via biological constraints and social rules into the simplest form capable of containing meaning.

Chomsky says that children are born with a knowledge of the principles of the grammatical structure of all languages, and this inborn knowledge explains the success and speed with which they learn language. Anyone who has observed a child develop from 18 months to 8 years will appreciate this view.

For language adequately to communicate concepts, it must be able to transmit the deep structure of a message. Since the word is not the experience, a language must be able (a) to interpret an idea properly; (b) to form a legitimate internal representation of that idea; and (c) to convey an adequately accurate internal representation of that idea to the other person.

The problem in communicating by language arises from the fact that we each have our own, unique representation of reality, i.e. we do not all share the same model of reality. It is easy for us to accept a failure to communicate when speaking to (or listening to) someone in another language with which we/they are unfamiliar. It is less easy to appreciate, when we are both using the same language, that we may be suffering a similar failure to communicate, because we are interpreting words in a different way, or because we are using different representational systems.

“There’s an illusion that people understand each other when they repeat the same words. But since those words internally access different experience - which they must - then there’s always going to be a difference in meaning.

“There’s a slippage between the word and the experience, and there’s also a slippage between my corresponding experience for a word and your corresponding experience for the same word. I think it’s extremely useful for you to behave so that your clients . . . have the illusion that you understand what they are saying verbally. I caution you against accepting the illusion for yourself.”⁽²⁾

References

⁽¹⁾ *The Tyranny of Words*. Stuart Chase.

⁽²⁾ *Frogs Into Princes*. Bandler and Grinder.

⁽³⁾ *Adam's Rib*. Ruth Herschberger. (Pellegrini & Cudahy, 1948) [Josie, a female chimpanzee is the subject of a study arguing that males are naturally dominant over females and that females naturally engage in prostitution. In the interview, Josie tells her side of the story. She points out flaws in the experiment and offers a more woman-centered interpretation of her actions. Herschberger has written a very funny, satirical piece, which calls into question assumptions about gender issues.] Some of Herschberger's poetry may be seen on our Verse page.

⁽⁴⁾ *Syntactic Structures*. Noam Chomsky. (1957)

Recommended reading:

Language in Thought and Action - S.I. Hayakawa

Language and Mind. Noam Chomsky

The Meaning of Meaning. C.K. Ogden and L.A. Richards.

Usage and Abusage. Eric Partridge.

Science and Sanity. Alfred Korzybski.

Ambiguity

The disastrous charge of the Light Brigade at Balaclava in the Crimean War was made because of a carelessly worded order to “charge for the guns” - meaning that some British guns which were in an exposed position should be hauled out of reach of the enemy, not that the Russian positions should be charged.^[1]



[Illustration by Albert Saunders from *An ABC of NLP*, ASPEN London, 1992]

The second edition of *An ABC of NLP* [1998] defines Ambiguity as “The experience of encountering sentences which have more than one meaning. For example: I must leave you to discover an example, or We agree with striking workers.” Reference is also made to the transformational model of language, a linguistic method of analysis first suggested by Zellig S. Harris and developed by his pupil Noam Chomsky, wherein two levels of structure are identified in language: deep structure and surface structure. Surface structure is the means by which a statement is presented to the world; deep structure is the unconscious level containing content, context and relationships and meaning has to be deduced using the experience of our culture.

Thus the difficulty in avoiding ambiguity. A useful working tip is: never assume that because a thought, a statement, or a sentence is clear to you, it must necessarily be clear to others.

A remarkable work, published first in 1930, and reprinted and revised on innumerable occasions since then, was *Seven Types of Ambiguity*,^[2] a book that seems as fresh today as when it was first published. Empson defines ambiguity

as any verbal nuance, however slight, which gives room for alternative reactions to the same piece of language. He then proceeds to consider a series of ambiguities and “to arrange them in order of increasing distance from simple statement and logical exposition.”

The seven types “intended as stages of advancing logical disorder” are illustrated by a number of poetic examples. Thus, the first ambiguity “occurs when two or more meanings all add to the single meaning of the author:

Cupid is winged and doth range;
Her country so my love doth change.
But change she earth, or change she sky
Yet I will love her till I die.

“Change” may mean “move to another” or “alter the one you have got”, and “earth” may be “the lady’s private world, or the poet’s, or that of mankind at large.”

Another type of ambiguity “occurs when two ideas which are connected only by being both relevant in the context, can be given in one word simultaneously.” A further type “occurs when two or more meanings of a statement do not agree among themselves, but combine to make clear a more complicated state of mind in the author.”

Of the next type of ambiguity, Empson draws the conclusion: “Ambiguities of this sort may profitably be divided into those which, once understood, remain an intelligible unit in the mind, those in which the pleasure belongs to the act of working out and understanding . . . and those in which the ambiguity works best if it is never discovered. To illustrate this he subjects Shakespeare’s 18th Sonnet “But wherefore do not you a mightier way,” to a searching analysis of the equivocal words and the ambiguous grammar.

The fifth type of ambiguity occurs where there is a “simile which applies to nothing explicitly, but lies half way between two things when the author is moving from one to the other. Shakespeare continually does it.”

Our natures do pursue
Like rats that ravin down their proper bane
A thirsty evil, and when we drink we die.

The ambiguity lies with the use of the word “proper” to mean a poison suitable for rats, but also having an irrelevant suggestion of “right and natural”.

Another type of ambiguity “occurs when a statement says nothing by tautology, by contradiction, or by irrelevant statements, so that the reader is forced to invent statements of his own.” An example is taken from Max Beerbohm’s Zuleika Dobson that “she was not strictly beautiful.” Empson comments: “Do not suppose that she was anything so commonplace as [merely beautiful]; do not suppose that you can easily imagine what she was like, or that she was, probably, the rather out-of-the-way type that you particularly admire”.

Of the seventh type, Empson states: “the most ambiguous that can be conceived, occurs when the two meanings of the word, the two values of the ambiguity . . . are the two opposite meanings defined by the context, so that the total effect is to show a fundamental division in the writer’s mind.” Thus in *Macbeth*:

Come what may,
Time, and the hour, runs through the roughest day.

Here are some examples, taken from *The Reader Over Your Shoulder*^[1] which you might try to fit into Empson’s categories. Some actually fit into several simultaneously.

[From a newspaper story] “Ex-Sergt. Oliver Brooks, VC, hero of Loos, who has died at Windsor, aged 51, was decorated by King George V, who was in bed in a train, following the accident when he fell from his horse in France.”

“I admire the man who is man enough to go up to a man whom he sees bullying a child or a weaker man and tell him, as man to man, that he must lay off.”

[From a pamphlet by Professor Denis Saurat, Director of the Institut Francais in London: “In the animal races those in which the female bears in pain give the greater care to their young, and those races in which birth is painless show, as a rule, no affection for their offspring.”

Footnotes

[1] *The Reader Over Your Shoulder*, by Robert Graves and Alan Hodge, Jonathan Cape 1943, p.81

[2] *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, by William Empson, Chatto & Windus, First Edition 1930.

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Endangered Languages and their Survival

(A language is an intricate collectively produced artefact inherited from previous generations.)

In 1995 at a seminar devoted to the cultural issues around the world's minority languages, it was estimated that some 6,500 languages existed. A study made in 2003 revealed that the number of languages actually spoken worldwide had shrunk to around 6,000.^[1] At this rate of attrition, languages are dwindling even faster than the world's wildlife. "The threats to birds and mammals are well known but it turns out that languages are far more threatened," ^[2]

The questions that might be asked are:

1. What is the reason for the loss of ethnic and regional languages?
2. What can be done to halt it?
3. Is there any point in trying to halt it?

But first . . .

SOME FACTS AND FIGURES

- It has been estimated by demographers and linguists that no more than 3,000 languages will survive the 21st century and two-thirds of these will be under threat in the following century. ^[3]
- In New Zealand, during the 20th century, the number of fluent Maori speakers fell from an estimated 64,000 in the early 1970s, to around 10,000 in 1995.
- Although English is largely replacing many of the "lost" languages, the English language is showing a relative decline compared to other languages. This is attributed to the more rapid population growth in areas where English is not generally spoken. Other major world languages are, however, declining more rapidly than English. Italian and French are two such examples.

"Twenty years ago, everybody spoke French in Spain. Today, in Burgos, there are more French teachers than students!"
[Julia Martinez, a teacher from Burgos]

- Mandarin Chinese is currently - and has been for a considerable time - the world's largest language in terms of native speakers. The next four major languages are English, Spanish, Hindi/Urdu, and Arabic. It has been estimated that by the mid-21st century these four languages will rank equal in number of speakers, with Arabic rising as English declines.

● One cannot overestimate the impact that the Internet and the worldwide web is having on language change. English is effectively the lingua franca of the Internet.

● A seminar attended by European language teachers in February 2005 in France concluded that “French is disappearing from European classrooms in favour of English. The predominance of English on the internet, the relative ease of learning basic English and the perception that English is “cooler” - thanks in large part to popular music and films - means French is becoming ever more restricted to older generations and the upper classes of many countries where it used to be the second language of choice in schools.” This was generally deplored. Somewhat surprisingly, the greatest disapproval was expressed by the Japanese participants.

● From a commercial aspect, it will be more and more essential for Mandarin Chinese to be studied, perhaps even replacing French as the second language of choice for native English speakers, as China bids to become the world’s major economic power.

“When the Chinese economy has overtaken that of the United States, no one will be able to ignore its global power,”

-

David Graddol, M.D. of The English Company

● In much of Africa, multilingualism is the norm rather than the exception and many Africans are able to speak five or six tribal languages in addition to their own mother tongue. Nevertheless, small tribal languages are under continual threat from their larger neighbours. The Khoisan language group, for example, to which the Hottentot and Bushman tongues belong, is almost extinct. The Cambap language of Cameroon in West Africa is used by just 30 native speakers.

● Asia has many threatened languages including some located in the Xinjiang and Yunnan provinces of China. . In Southeast Asia, minority languages in Nepal and Malaysia are under threat. In Japan, however, Ainu, a threatened tongue spoken in Hokkaido, is making a comeback as a result of the efforts of native speakers and a change in official government policy.

● In Australia, one of the areas where language extinction has exacted the heaviest toll, few of the surviving 250 or so Aboriginal languages are still viable.

● In Arctic North America many Eskimo and Amerindian languages are threatened. The status of native American tongues in Canada and the United States being worst hit.

● In Central and South America, large numbers of languages are moribund, while many of the languages that are still viable have drastically reduced numbers of speakers. The Leco language of the Bolivian Andes is spoken by about 20 people.

● For many years it has been determined and official policy to re-invigorate the Welsh language. This policy has more recently been adopted in Cornwall, too, with road signs and place names being shown in both English and Cornish.

WHAT CAUSES THE LOSS OF ETHNIC AND REGIONAL LANGUAGES?

The decline is due in no small measure to the absence of motivation to retain traditional languages as a consequence of economic and political pressures on minority communities. It does not reflect any deficiency in the languages themselves.

The most obvious sign that a language is about to die is that it is no longer spoken by children. When the older generation dies, the language dies with them. In the severe loss of the Maori-speaking population referred to above, there was virtually no language transmission from Maori parents to their children between the 1960s and the 1970s. Towards the end of the 20th century a determined effort has been made to halt this loss. and in 1987 Maori was made an official language of New Zealand alongside English. Witness the adoption of the “haka” tribal dance by the New Zealand rugby team before its matches.

But the pressure on minor language speakers to stop using their language, and particularly amongst the younger generation, has gradually grown with increased global intercourse; with easier transport communications worldwide; with increased use of computers and the Internet; with greater dissemination of films, books and television programmes. People, and young people in particular, simply don’t want to learn languages that they know few people outside their immediate vicinity will be able to understand.

“A small community, isolated or bilingual, may continue for centuries to speak a unique language, while in another place a populous language may for social or political reasons die out in little more than a generation.” -

Foundation for Endangered Languages ^[4]

In addition to the general decline of languages as a result of social and economic pressures, there is also an insidious undermining of the strength of minor languages by the introduction into speech of “loan words”, that is words taken from another language to replace words that already exist in the minor language. This is a common occurrence in most languages regardless of their size or importance. Witness, for example, the vast vocabulary of French, German, Spanish and Italian words that have been introduced into the English language over the centuries; to

say nothing of the Anglo-Indian words that are numerous enough for an entire dictionary to be devoted to them.^[5]

An interesting comparison can be made between the decline of languages and the decline of certain species. There is a biological effect known as the Allee Effect (after W.C. Allee who wrote about it in the mid-20th century) whereby the reproduction and survival of individuals decreases as a positive relationship between population density and per capita growth rate. In the animal kingdom this effect may be found when breeding declines because animals have difficulty in finding a mate. Other species such as fish may use more effective strategies such as schooling. The Allee effect may also occur with rare languages. This effect has also been studied by Professor Bill Sutherland [op cit].

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO HALT IT?

We have already referred to the resemblance between the extinction of a language and the extinction of a biological species. Of course, the parallel is not complete. For instance, a world with only one species is an impossibility, whereas it is a theoretical possibility that the world could eventually become monolingual. There is, however, considerable activity worldwide to protect endangered languages.

The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages was adopted in 1992 by the Council of Europe to protect and promote historical regional and minority languages in Europe.

The charter provides a large number of different actions state parties can take to protect and promote historical regional and minority languages. It applies only to languages traditionally associated with the region and excludes mere local dialects of official languages or languages used by recent immigrants. Languages which have been used historically within regions of a State or by linguistic minorities within the State are, however, incorporated. This includes such languages as Yiddish, Romany, Catalan. Interestingly, the Republic of Ireland is unable to sign the Charter on behalf of the Irish Language as it is defined as the first official language of the state, even though it is a minority language; on the other hand the UK has been able to ratify the Charter in respect of Irish in Northern Ireland where English is the official first language. It has also ratified the Charter in respect to Welsh.

WELSH

The 2001 census reveals that more than 20 per cent of the Welsh population are Welsh speaking, an increase of two per cent in one decade, this despite the fact that 25 per cent of residents were born outside Wales. Although for many Welsh people, particularly in the main Welsh-speaking areas of North and West Wales, Welsh may be their first language of choice, very few indeed are monolingual.

It was during the second half of the 20th century that Welsh began its major revival and this coincided, unsurprisingly, with the rise of nationalist political organisations such as Plaid Cymru. It is very much a living language and the

Welsh Language Act of 1993 and the Government of Wales Act 1998 provide that the Welsh and English languages should be treated on a basis of equality. Official literature and public documents are typically produced in both languages and all road signs are in both English and Welsh.

Aiding the prominence of Welsh has been the creation of the television channel S4C in 1982 which broadcasts exclusively in Welsh during peak viewing hours.

CORNISH

The Cornish language in the south-west of England, like Welsh, is of Celtic origin but shares more of its basic vocabulary with Breton than with Welsh. . Cornish died out in the 19th century and then got revived by enthusiasts in the 20th century. It is estimated that about 300 to 400 people can now speak fluent Cornish and around 3,500 speak it to a basic conversational level.

Cornwall County Council is committed to support the language and passed a motion supporting it being specified within the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. There are regular Cornish language periodicals and section in Cornish in local newspapers, as well as a Cornish language radio station.

The language has financial sponsorship from several sources including the Millennium Commission and, as in Wales, bilingual road signs are more and more in evidence.

BRETON

Breton is traditionally spoken in Lower Brittany, France. It was originally the language of the elite until the 12th century. Subsequently the nobility and then the bourgeoisie adopted French. Yet in 1930 1.3 million people were still estimated to speak Breton, although this dropped to a mere 500,000 by the end of the 20th century. One might imagine that the considerable number of Breton speakers would ensure the survival of the language and that it might be protected by the State in the same way as Welsh. However the French authorities have steadfastly refused to grant Breton the status of a national language.

Indeed, Breton is the only Celtic language that is not recognised as an official language because France has refused to change the second article of the Constitution added in 1994 which states that “the language of the Republic is French”. The number of protesters demanding the repeal of this article grows year by year, and the publishing of bilingual dictionaries from Breton into other languages, such as English, German and Spanish, demonstrates the determination of a new generation to gain international recognition for Breton..

HEBREW

The most striking example of a language whose decline was not only halted, but expanded, is that of Hebrew in the 20th century. But there were special historical and unique socio-political reasons for this. The revival of Hebrew as a mother tongue is generally attributed to the efforts of Eliezar Ben-Yehuda who had emigrated from Tsarist Russia to Palestine in 1881. He aimed at modernising the

ancient literary language and adapting it to everyday communication. It was the second major wave of immigration into Palestine during the early part of the 20th century, however, that gave real impetus and momentum to his efforts. In 1922, under the British mandate, Hebrew was recognised as one of the three official languages of Palestine - the others being English and Arabic. By the time the State of Israel had been formed, Hebrew had become the main language of the Jewish population, replacing Yiddish, Ladino, Arabic, Russian and the myriad other languages brought into Palestine by the people of the Jewish diaspora.

MAORI

For much of the 20th century the Maori language was seemingly heading for extinction in New Zealand with numbers of fluent Maori speakers estimated to have dropped from around 64,000 in 1970 to around 10,000 in 1995. The loss of language actually dated back a generation because there had been little transmission of Maori from parents to children during that time. Subsequently, with the establishment of “language nests”^[7] in 1982 the decline was halted.

Language nests provided a fun, home-like environment for children under the age of five, where they were intensively exposed to the Maori language. By the end of the 20th century there were over 800 language nests across the country, and more than 100,000 Maori children had been introduced to their native tongue.

In 1987 Maori joined English as an official language of New Zealand and the original Maori name of Aotearoa (meaning Land of the Long White Cloud) made its appearance on most of the publicity material issued by the New Zealand Tourist Board. Nowadays more than half of all New Zealand’s schoolchildren study the language to some extent and many Maori words are finding their way into everyday vocabulary. This is a healthy reversal of the situation that exists when a minority language is in decline.

CANADA’S INDIGENOUS TONGUES ^[8]

The language nests introduced into New Zealand (see above), whereby pre-school children are taught a heritage language, served as a model for the rescue programme of two First Nations communities in British Columbia, the Province that is home to more than half of Canada’s 50 or so indigenous languages. It has been suggested that only three of these languages is expected to survive: Cree, Ojibwa and Inuktitut none of which is historically rooted in British Columbia.

Graduate student Onowa McIvor studied the language nests of Lil’wat and Secwepemc for her master’s thesis in the hope of inspiring other First Nations communities to revive their languages.

McIvor examined each of the Lil’wat and Secwepemc community’s language revival stories, the resources they used, how they kept the programme going and how they overcame barriers. Her passion to protect languages comes from personal experience; it took just one generation for her family to lose their aboriginal language.

"My grandparents spoke Swampy Cree but grew up in the era of assimilation. They were told that maintaining their language would hinder their children's future," she says. "Consequently, they were fluent Cree speakers but never spoke it to their children, a story all too common in Canadian aboriginal history.

McIvor discovered that one of the main barriers to language revival is a lack of government support. As the Ministry of Health licenses most childcare programs in B.C., workers must have early childhood educator certification (ECE). Through ECE certification, childcare programs are eligible for subsidies and other types of funding, such as capital-cost start up money. But language nests don't quite fit the mould of other childcare programs.

"This doesn't mean they are a less-quality program, they're just different," she says. "Because you need traditional language speakers to be the main caregivers, those people wouldn't necessarily have ECE-certified training."

In the Secwepemc community, for example, there are two kinds of people working in the language nests: elders who are traditional speakers and "middle-generation" women with education degrees. However, because they don't have ECE certificates, the program is not eligible for funding.

"It's quite ridiculous to think about sending either elders or those with bachelor degrees back for a one-year college course to teach them how to raise children," McIvor says. "As one community participant put it, 'We have been raising our children for thousands of years. We don't need anyone to tell us how to do it.'"

McIvor believes that, despite funding challenges and even resistance within their own communities, the Lil'wat and Secwepemc nations offer inspiration and hope to other indigenous communities in Canada who want to save their languages.

IS THERE ANY POINT IN TRYING TO HALT IT?

"When the last speakers go, they take with them their history and culture."^[6]

In 1994, publisher Rupert Murdoch delivered the 11th annual John Boynton lecture in Melbourne, in the course of which he said,

"Indian leaders have long been desperately worried about disunity in their vast, teeming, multilingual country. There has been an effort ever since independence to promote Hindi as the lingua franca, what in India is called the "link language". But the effort has failed for a number of reasons.

"Until now. With the coming of the electronic mass media, Hindi is finally spreading because everyone wants to watch the best television programming. And I suspect we will see this story repeated throughout the developing world,

not least in China with Mandarin. In which case, it will be not only prosperity that we will catch in our networks, but also order - and ultimately, peace.'

Sounds good. Particularly if you are a media mogul wanting to sell newspapers, TV programmes and other forms of mass communication.

So what is the true value of a language?

Every language contains material that is of value to cultural historians, anthropologists, psychologists and philosophers in addition to the more obvious students of linguistics. The fact is that a language is not merely a means of communicating verbal messages, it is also a storehouse of a people's cultural heritage; it helps to identify their way of life and their sense of identity. Each language contains clues about a people's history.

Before the arrival of Europeans in 1500, Brazil was home to an estimated population of between five and 13 million people in at least 1,000 tribes. Five hundred years of exposure to disease, violence and dispossession wiped out the vast majority of this indigenous population. Today, there are around 350,000 Indians in Brazil in over 200 tribes, who live scattered all across the country. The tribes range in size from the Guarani and Yanomami, who number tens of thousands, to tribes such as the Akuntsu and Kanoê, who number only a few dozen. Between them they speak a vast number of languages, from a variety of language families; 110 of the tribal languages of Brazil have less than 400 speakers.

On April 21st 1995, Bristol University Philosophy Department hosted a one-day seminar, in the course of which reference was made to the Waimiri-Atroari tribe of Brazil.

"Consider the imperilled language Waimiri-Atroari, a language of the Carib family spoken by a precarious community of 500 Indians in Brazilian Amazonia, most of whom are (or were until very recently) monolingual. These people need to share information in order to stay alive, so [the language] has extremely high instrumental value for about 500 people. It has zero instrumental value for everyone else, apart from the traders and officials who wish to communicate with the Waimiri-Atroari.

"The fact that a population needs some medium of communication does not provide a knock-down reason in favour of the particular language, especially in circumstances where [it] is competing against another language. Compared with a world language, the volume of messages actually carried in Waimiri-Atroari is minuscule because the number of speakers is so small. If the same people spoke Portuguese, they would have potential communicational access to 160 million Brazilians. Many of the 500 individuals, and their future children, will in fact learn Portuguese in the next few years. As the proportion of bilinguals in the tribe goes up, so the instrumental advantage of the native language gets eroded. By the year 2000, many of the message-carrying functions of Waimiri-Atroari within the Waimiri-Atroari community may have been usurped by Portuguese. Adult speakers

will stop using [it] as their default language. When the children are not even motivated to learn [Waimiri-Atroari], the language will have become moribund.”

People define themselves partly in relation to their culture. It is not surprising that the Waimiri-Atroari tribe celebrates its own language and teaches the young people to prize it as a thing of value. A language is an intricate collectively produced artefact inherited from previous generations. Whichever language one absorbs as a child, the truth is that the language is a gift.

Let us now turn to the impersonal and scientific reasons for preserving an endangered language based on its value as an object of study. Here we must distinguish between existing and living. Let us say that a language's existence is secure, provided there exists an authoritative dictionary of its words, plus a description of its phonetics and phonology, plus a reasonably complete account of its syntax, plus rules for assigning meanings to its sentences. This information defines the language and distinguishes it from all other languages. Additional facts about the language that one would wish to find in an archive include its position in a scheme of classification of the world's languages, its origin, its historical development, the geographical location of its speakers, and so on. Some researches are greatly helped if there exist recordings of speech on tape and video. In the case of a written language, a sample of authentic texts will provide extra information.

Compiling such an archive is usually a feasible task. For each threatened language that still has not been documented, a team of linguists and anthropologists might need to spend ten years collecting data and processing. After that work is done, if the language stops being spoken, there will be a theoretical possibility of reviving it or creating an approximation to it.

Linguists glean a lot from comparing the syntactical rules of different languages. It has been suggested that Noam Chomsky's well-known hypothesis that all human languages conform to an innately specified general pattern, which he called 'Universal Grammar' is supposed to be an empirical hypothesis. Evidence from a wide variety of languages is essential in order to test it properly. For all we know, some language exists which could undermine Chomsky's hypothesis. But if the language were to disappear out without being documented, we would never know that it provided a counterexample.

The fact that a language continues to be alive does yield additional scientific information about processes of change. For a living language is a dynamic entity. Pronunciation and intonation patterns change, new words are coined, even grammatical norms slowly change. Every language has pragmatic rules for performing different kinds of speech acts, manners, gestures, styles of delivery, and so on, which are often highly mutable. Video and sound recordings capture only a small sample of utterances, and these immediately become fossilized.

Archives, however rich, provide only a partial description of that part of a language which has been historically actualized at the time they happen to be compiled. There are scientific advantages in having access to the real thing, and not merely to a record of the thing. But are these advantages important enough to provide an overriding reason to strive to keep a language alive, in cases where it appears to be heading for extinction?

The continuing growth worldwide of government and institutional intervention and legislation suggests that the answer must be a resounding “Yes”.

Will such intervention and legislation prove successful in the long run, and against the trend and pressure of media, political, economic and sociological impetus for the unification of language, remains to be seen. It doesn't take much exposure to a dominant culture, after all, to motivate ambitious young people to replace their mother tongue with a language that gives them better access to education, jobs and new technology.

[1] I am here referring to languages spoken by more than 100,000 people.

[2] Professor Bill Sutherland, a population biologist at the University of East Anglia, UK

[3] Atlas of the World's Languages, 1994

[4] <http://www.ogmios.org/home.htm>

[5] Hobson-Jobson: a *Glossary of Anglo-Indian Colloquial Words and Phrases*, 1886

[6] David Crystal, Editor of *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language*

[7] This was a nationwide network of early childhood centres to nurture a knowledge of the Maori language among children.

[8] Based on article by Lynda Hills, February 2005. The full article and other material relevant to the Canadian indigenous language revival programmes will be found at <http://www.turtleisland.org/culture/culture-language.htm>

Korzybski Revisited



INTRODUCTION

After I published the second edition of my *An ABC of NLP*, one reviewer complained that I had given too little prominence to Korzybski. He was right. Apart from a passing reference to Korzybski's invention of the phrase "The map is not the territory", I devoted most of my linguistical hero-worship to Noam Chomsky and his transformational grammar. This provoked the criticism of another reviewer that I had overindulged some of my descriptive material. He was also right. But it just goes to show . . . something. I'm not sure what.

Anyway, after the passage of more than ten years, at a time when I'm considering whether to reprint the second edition of the book or totally revise it in a third edition, I'm taking a little time out to remind myself of how important was Korzybski's contribution to the area of semantics.

"The map is not the territory" is, of course, the phrase with which Korzybski is associated by so many people who have been exposed to none of his writings other than that phrase.[2] Yet he made a real impact on such populist writers as S.I. Hayakawa and Stuart Chase; and although Chomsky and others may not have followed in his footsteps, at least their thinking must have been influenced initially by their efforts to dispute his General Semantics theory.

It is somewhat sad, therefore, to see how quickly he has faded from academic consideration. The index to Ray Jackendoff's splendid work *Foundations of Language* (2002) has 49 references to Noam Chomsky, spread over 71 pages, and not a single, pitiful mention of Korzybski. Sic transit . . .

BIOGRAPHY

Although the idea may not appeal to academics, I consider that Korzybski's achievements are worthy of praise as much for the non-academic background from which they emanated as for their subsequent adoption by the academic community.

Korzybski was 36 years old before he learned to speak English, although he had earlier learned Russian, French and German in addition to his native Polish.

During the first World War he was sent to North America as an artillery expert for the Russian Army. It was while in Canada that he first studied English which became his language of choice for the writing of his books. He moved to the United States and remained there after the war, marrying an American citizen in 1919.

He had still not embarked upon research into language, but was studying the differences between humans and animals. He regarded animals as “space-binders” in that they were merely hunters and gatherers by nature; whereas he named human behaviour “time-binding” as it incorporated the human capacity to anticipate needs, learn from experience and transmit experiences via symbols to later generations.

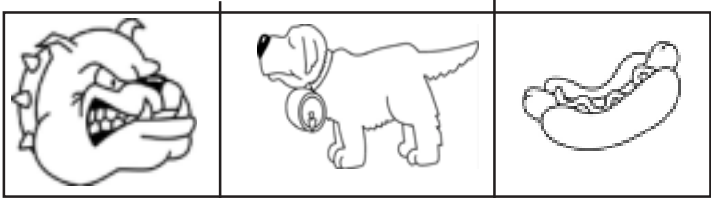
Encouraged to develop and publish his ideas, Korzybski wrote *Manhood of Humanity: The Science and Art of Human Engineering* which was published in 1921. His researches into the mechanisms of time-binding continued for several years, part of which were spent studying psychiatry in Washington D.C., and culminating in the writing of his most famous book *Science and Sanity: An Introduction to Non-Aristotelian Systems and General Semantics* which was published in 1933.

The intention behind the book was to apply the predictability of scientific-mathematical methods to everyday behaviour. Korzybski maintained that the human capability of symbolism, i.e. language, permitted the summary and generalisation of experience and the ability to pass it on to others, avoiding continual “reinvention of the wheel”. To the seminars he conducted at various seats of learning, he applied the term General Semantics.

In 1938 he was involved in the foundation of the Institute of General Semantics in Chicago, designed to promote research into the new discipline. He died suddenly of a heart attack in 1950. The American Journal of Psychiatry commented: “The death of this great teacher . . . deepens appreciation of his essential contribution to human understanding on an individual, widely social, or international scale.”

THEORIES

Korzybski propounded a theory that because no two persons, or situations, or stages of process are the same in all respects, confusion can arise between the identification of objects or situations that apparently are the same. For example, the word “dog” may be applied to millions of different dogs, or to the same dog at different times.



What do you think of when you hear the word “dog”?

Are you filled with trepidation, love or hunger?

You may even picture a dog on a throne, with a crown on its head. Saur was the name of a dog that was “king” of Norway for three years during the 11th century AD. The Norwegian king, angry that his subjects wished to depose him, put Saur on the throne and demanded that it be treated regally.

In fact, Korzybski used the example of apples and not dogs. Apples placed side by side were designated Apple1, Apple2, and so on. Is Apple1 the same as Apple2? At first glance we might say “yes”. But on closer examination we recognise differences: size, colour, length of stem . . . so that while such differences might not be important in general conversation, they could be utterly significant in a scientific context. Similarly if a fictitious Martian were to arrive on earth and be confronted by, say, the participants at a United Nations assembly, and be told: “these are people”, the Martian might see no significant differences between them. To each other, however, differences of race, nationality, pigmentation, gender, etc. will be highly significant.

Korzybski formulated a “law of individuality” and set out to teach people to break away from the restraints of formal language and to recognise the differences between orders of abstraction. The word “dog”, for example, is not the animal (nor the food) but an abstraction, standing in place of the object to which it refers. To ensure that language is more appropriately evaluated by people they are encouraged to use more actional, relational terms. Instead of saying something “is”, it could be described in a way that relates to a greater whole. Thus people are encouraged to interpret the unique characteristics of a situation rather than react spontaneously.

In his *Power of Words*^[1], Stuart Chase describes 21 statements in General Semantics taken from the second edition of *Science and Sanity*. These are:

1. No two events in nature are identical. There is no apparent disagreement with this statement by modern scientists.
2. Nature works in dynamic processes. Modern physics is at odds with the linear, cause-and-effect structure of our language.
3. Events flow into one another in nature by “insensible gradations”. Nature is all of a piece though our language tends to separate it into classes.
4. Nature is best understood in terms of structure, order, relationships. Einstein’s principles of relativity may be at odds with the Indo-European languages, with their substantives, entities and absolutes.
5. Events in nature are four-dimensional. Physics is based on the concept of space-time. Some languages are structured for three dimensions and their speakers have difficulty with the concept of time.

6. Events have unlimited characteristics. The use of the symbol “etc.” can act as a warning signal.
7. There is no simultaneity in nature. Western languages make this assumption; physics does not.
8. There are no abstract qualities outside our heads. Think of Occam’s Razor. the use of quotation marks can act as a warning.
9. Natural “laws” are at best only high probabilities. The structure of English favours absolute laws and eternal principles.
10. Multivalued logic is cardinal in understanding and explaining nature. We need to avoid two-valued thinking. The use of the symbol “etc.” can act as a warning signal.
11. A word is not a thing but an artificial symbol. The use of quotations marks helps to avoid this confusion.
12. A fact is not an inference; an inference is not a value judgement. A proper identification begins with the facts; too often people jump straight to the level of value judgements.
13. A map is not the territory. We need to avoid confusing the label given to an object with the non-verbal object itself.
14. The language of mathematics contains structures which correspond to the structure of nature. Korzybski’s belief that this would encourage a new crop of physicists was duly justified.
15. “Reality” is apperceived on three levels: macroscopic, microscopic, submicroscopic.
16. The systems of Aristotle, Euclid and Newton are now special cases and outmoded as general systems. Their “laws” cover less territory than was formerly supposed.
17. Extensional, or objective, thinking is clearer and more accurate than intensional, or thinking inside one’s skull. Find the referent.
18. At the end of all verbal behaviour are undefined terms. At this point the senses must pick up the signs from nature.
19. Language is self-reflexive. It is possible to make statements about a statement about a statement indefinitely.
20. Man alone among earth’s creatures “binds time”, that is, profits by the experience of past generations.
21. The nervous system can be consciously reoriented to improve evaluation. Science can restore sanity.

EVALUATION

The fact that General Semantics and Korzybski have been so neglected is possibly because of the failure to update them. They lack credibility and acceptability in today’s scientific, philosophical, and educational circles. Please note, in considering

this statement, that General Semantics should not be confused with general semantics and I have used the upper case initial letters to confine the phrase to Korzybski's material.

He himself has emphasized that his conclusions need to be continually re-evaluated and updated in the light of new knowledge, and made subject to the same critical review and testing that all scientific knowledge gets as new discoveries are made. Alas, so much new theory has evolved, not least due to the work of Chomsky, that Korzybski, inevitably it would seem, has had to take a back seat.

I exclude from this comment, nevertheless, the Institute of General Semantics that was established with Alfred Korzybski's initiative in 1938 and continues to this day. My major criticism, however, is that it treats the rest of the field of semantics with the sort of neglect to which it is itself subject.

I close this article with a quotation from an Internet forum. I offer it with sadness in my heart because, although it seems to reinforce a lot of the material produced in that and similar forums, it is rather like debunking Socrates simply because philosophy and philosophers have moved on so much in the centuries that followed him.

"I studied linguistics in the program where Chomsky teaches. Part of our preparation for qualifying exams was to read a rather long list of books. . . . No book, article or chapter by either Korzybski or Hayakawa was included in the list; what's more, no article, chapter or book ever gave a "reference" to them. They are totally unimportant in mainstream American or European linguistics, as far as I can tell. They seem to be popularisers of what might be considered to be, let's say, 'urban myths' in linguistics. My opinion is that what they do has a similar relation to linguistics as the one that alchemy has to chemistry."

[Or Socrates to philosophy?]

Oh, dear . . .

[1] *The Power of Words*, Stuart Chase, Phoenix House, 1955.

Chase the Ace

"For those who believe, no proof is necessary. For those who don't believe, no proof is possible" - Stuart Chase



INTRODUCTION

The tribute I paid to Alfred Korzybski in the previous issue of Nurturing Potential made reference to Stuart Chase. Indeed his name, and referrals to his written works, have appeared fairly consistently in the articles published in Nurturing Potential's language section. I felt it was time he was given an airing in his own behalf.

SIC TRANSIT GLORIA MUNDI

Hardly anyone - at least amongst my acquaintances - seems to have heard of Stuart Chase. Yet, during his lifetime, and particularly in the years prior to World War II, Stuart Chase was a widely read and highly respected figure in several fields, notably that of communication. He has been described as "the first writer to reduce to the language of the layman the interesting science of clarifying the meaning of words", i.e. semantics.

Fittingly, having determined to pay this tribute to Chase, I discovered that a similar project had been completed by writers William Alan Hodson and John Carfora in the September-October 2004 issue of the Harvard Magazine. I have drawn some material from their article (but have acknowledged their contribution wherever I have done so).^[1]

Stuart Chase was born in New Hampshire, USA, in 1888 and educated at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard University, studying economics, banking and accounting with classmates such as T.S. Eliot and Walter Lippmann, and finding himself challenged by new developments in many different areas of human activity: sociological, political, economic and educational.

On the eve of his 23rd birthday, he wrote: "So many are the roads and lanes and byways that branch from this open portal. I look back and see the straight, calm thoroughfare that has led me here. I look forward and stand dazed and blinded before the myriad ways that lead to ultimate darkness or light. Now I must choose my own path... from among the many and follow it in all faith and

trust until experience bids me seek another. The world always turns aside to let one pass who knows where they are going.”

Hodson and Carfora write that his “life and work won him international acclaim as a critic of unprincipled corporate practices, an innovator in consumer protection, a promoter of altruistic economic policies, an advocate for adult learning and mass public education, and an activist for responsive government and ecological stewardship. He advised presidents and interpreted contemporary issues for ordinary men and women in 35 books and hundreds of pamphlets and articles, seeking to help people improve their lives.”

SOCIO-POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

His early working career, after graduating cum laude from Harvard, was in his father’s accounting firm from which, after a few years, he transferred to that of corporate accounting, becoming determined to reveal and eradicate the several irregularities he discovered. His pressure on Congress following his report on the meat-packing industry resulted in his being fired from his position with the Federal Trade Commission. But he would never allow his high standards to lapse.

His activities brought him to the attention of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, then (in 1931) Governor of New York. Shortly afterwards, Chase published a book *A New Deal* which became the focus of Roosevelt’s economic policy after assuming the Presidency. Subsequently, in February 1937, when President Roosevelt, in order to ensure the satisfactory implementation of his New Deal, endeavoured to introduce laws designed to streamline social legislation through the courts, and was being hamstrung by the establishment, Chase wrote a letter to the New York Times.^[2] The newspaper refused to publish it. Nevertheless, Roosevelt eventually had his way. As one observer put it: “What the President is proposing is to dynamite the reactionary judges into retirement”.^[3]

According to Hodson and Carfora, “in 1937, the president told Chase’s father that his son was “teaching the American people more about economics than all the others combined.” Others concurred: in 1942 a magazine writer noted, “[H]e perhaps more than any other one person has made economics interesting and understandable to everyday people like you and me.”

This was Chase’s great strength: the ability to put concepts and ideas into language that was comprehensible and accessible to “everyday people like you and me”.

A final extract from Hodson and Carfora: “A steadfast believer in adult education and lifelong learning, which he considered essential for participatory democracy, Chase was a noteworthy defender of the common citizen’s aptitude for understanding vital civic questions. Across seven decades and 49 states, he mesmerized lecture audiences with disarmingly simple and inspiring insights into the social issues that were his passion.”

But this is intended as an article in the Language section of Nurturing Potential, so let us turn our attention to Chase's contribution in this area, with merely a passing reference to certain similarities with a more recent linguistics expert, who also publishes regular writings in the areas of political and economic comment: Noam Chomsky.

Unlike Noam Chomsky, however, you will not find Stuart Chase's name in the index or in the bibliography section of major works on semantics. Noam Chomsky is an innovator and an academic; Stuart Chase was a populariser and publicist. Noam Chomsky will undoubtedly leave a great mark on the field of semantics and exert a considerable influence on fellow academics. Stuart Chase certainly exerted a greater influence on a far greater number of "common" citizens in his own lifetime. One is tempted to paraphrase Chase's own words: "The Lord prefers common looking people. That is why he made so many of them", into "I prefer addressing common people; there are so many more of them."

SEMANTICS

Stuart Chase produced two major works on the meaning and use of words, and there was a 16 year gap between them. In 1938 his *The Tyranny of Words* achieved such popularity as to achieve best-seller status. It ran to several editions and has never been out of print. In 1955 he published his *Power of Words*. *Tyranny* was inspired by Korzybski's *Science and Sanity*, reinforced by the writings of Lancelot Hogben, C.K. Ogden and I.A. Richards. Where these books would never have been read by the "general public", Chase made their content immediately accessible to the "man-in-the-street".^[4]

Here are some extracts from the opening chapter of *The Tyranny of Words*:
I have written several books and many articles, but only lately have I begun to inquire into the nature of the tools I use . . . Language, whether English, French, or Chinese, is taken for granted; a basic datum. Writers search their memories for a better word to use in a given context but are no more in the habit of questioning language than of questioning the weather . . . We assume that we know exactly what we mean, and that readers who do not understand us should polish their wits.

Years ago I read a little book by Allen Upward called The New Word. It was an attempt to get at the meaning of 'idealism' as used in the terms of the Nobel Prize . . . [He asked] a number of his friends to give their personal interpretation of the term . . . [and] . . . received the following replies: fanatical - poetical - altruistic - what cannot be proved - intangible - not practical - sentimental - opposite of materialism - exact - true - something to do with imaginative powers

This gave me pause. I thought I knew what 'idealism' meant right enough and had used it many times with confidence. Obviously, in the light of

Upward's study, what I meant was rarely if ever communicated to the hearer.

Another matter which distressed me was that I found it almost impossible to read philosophy. The great words went round and round in my head until I became dizzy. Sometimes they made pleasant music, but I could rarely effect passage between them and the real world of experience. William James I could usually translate, but the great classics had almost literally no meaning to me - 'absolute', 'oversoul', 'the universal', 'the nominal', 'the eternal'. . . The harder I wrestled, the more the solemn procession of verbal ghosts circled through my brain, mocking my ignorance. . .

Was there a way to make language a better vehicle for communicating ideas? I read Freud, Trotter, Le Bon, MacDougall, Watson, who gave me some light on motives but little on language. . . The first pioneer to help me was Count Alfred Korzybski, a Polish mathematician now living in the United States. He had written a book published in 1933 called Science and Sanity . . . [which] . . . was harder reading than all the philosophers combined, but it connected with my world of experience . . .

I went on to The Meaning of Meaning by C.K. Ogden and I.A. Richards . . . These three investigators - Korzybski, Ogden, and Richards - agree broadly on the two besetting sins of language. One is identification of words with things. The other is misuse of abstract words. 'This is a dog'. Is it? The thing that is called 'dog' is a nonverbal object. It can be observed by the senses, it can be described, and then, for convenience, the label 'dog' can be attached to it - or the label 'hund' or 'chien' or 'perro'. But the label is not the animal. . .

Ogden and Richards contribute a technical term, the 'referent', by which they mean the object or situation in the real world to which the word or label refers . . . the goal of semantics might be stated as 'Find the referent'. When people can agree on the things to which their words refer, minds meet. The communication line is cleared.

Labels as names for things may be roughly divided into three classes on an ascending scale:

- 1. Labels for common objects such as 'dog', 'chair', 'pencil'. Here difficulty is at a minimum.*
- 2. Labels for clusters or collections of things, such as 'mankind', 'consumer's goods', 'Germany', 'the white race', 'the courts'. These are abstractions of a higher order, and confusion in their use is widespread. There is no entity 'white race' in the world outside our heads, but only some millions of individuals with skins of an obvious or dubious whiteness.*
- 3. Labels for essences or qualities, such as 'the sublime', 'freedom', 'individualism', 'truth'. For such terms there are no discoverable referents*

in the outside world . . . This zone is the especial domain of philosophy, politics, and economics.

And here I will cease my quotations from *The Tyranny of Words* having covered a mere four pages of the first chapter or I'm likely to get so carried away by the magic of his text that I would not know when or where to stop. The book is still in print and can be obtained through Amazon or via your favoured book source. I urge you to get a copy and treat yourself to a fantastic read.

I recently came across the following on a website:

"About 50 or so years ago I read a book by Stuart Chase, *The Tyranny of Words*. It had a profound impact on my thinking. Not that I totally understood everything in the book, but I did understand the essence of what he wrote. I thought I had lost the book. However [my wife] found it for me the other day.

"I am re-reading it again. His ideas are much clearer to me now. I believe it is one of the most important books ever written for the layman about "semantics." Originally published in 1938, it is available at Amazon for \$7.95. If you are a thinking person, you must read the book".

And here is a quote from a review of the book found on the Amazon website:

"The book is dated but fascinating. It introduces the notion that much of what we argue about is really not an argument about facts but one about definitions. It is fascinating also to note the players in the 1930s and to see what their predictions became. A wonderful introduction to semantics with the caution that if you let an enemy select the terms of the argument, he has already won it."

AFTERWORD

Chase's later book, *Power of Words* (1955) is more difficult to find. It didn't carry the same "punch" as *Tyranny*, but has a lot of "meat" and amusing and valuable commentary on many aspects of language and communication. Written in collaboration with his wife Marian Tyler Chase, *Power* includes chapters on Linguistics, Super-linguistics, The Language of Science, Eminent Semanticists, Korzybski's Contribution; and then comes a section on Applications - the semantic basis of language in economics, international affairs, oratory, medicine, the media and education. It also has a chapter devoted to Gobbledygook that was sufficiently amusing for me to organise a special article on the subject from "Sep Meyer"^[5]..

SOME QUOTES FROM STUART CHASE:

"Attitude is your acceptance of the natural laws, or your rejection of the natural laws."

"Sanely applied advertising could remake the world."

"The very first law in advertising is to avoid the concrete promise and cultivate the delightfully vague."

“Traditional nationalism cannot survive the fissioning of the atom. One world or none.”

“Democracy, as has been said of Christianity, has never really been tried.”

References

[1] Their complete article will be found at

<http://www.harvardmagazine.com/on-line/090431.html>

[2] February 15, 1937. <http://newdeal.feri.org/court/chase.htm>

[3] Article in The Nation, February 13, 1937. <http://newdeal.feri.org/court/nation.htm>.

[4] He would no doubt have taken exception to “general public” and “man-in-the-street” and denounced both terms as abstractions.

[5] i.e. myself!

Clichés

[Avoid them like the plague]

I recently purchased a secondhand, hard-bound edition of Sir Ernest Gowers' *The Complete Plain Words* to replace my battered loose-leaf (not by design) paperback copy. Before placing it on my shelves I glanced through it . . . and was immediately lost in nostalgic reverence. His words are as fresh as ever; his thoughts as commonsense. My eyes alighted on his section dealing with clichés and this served to remind me that the Language section of the next issue of *Nurturing Potential* still lacked an article. "Write it yourself, Joe" I said to myself. So here it is.

To digress for a moment from the topic of this article, I'd like first to write a bit about Gowers and his book.

The Complete Plain Words is a single volume containing the combined works *Plain Words* and *The ABC of Plain Words*. It was published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office in London in 1954. Both those works had been written at the invitation of the British Treasury in an attempt to improve official English as used by civil servants. The first of them was a general introduction to the subject; the second was intended as a work of reference. The author's intention, in writing these books, was well expressed by the G.M. Young quotation that heads his prologue: "The final cause of speech is to get an idea as exactly as possible out of one mind and into another".

The book is as current as ever. It is as useful as ever. It remains a sheer delight (oh dear, is that a cliché?) for anyone with the remotest interest in language, its simplicity as well as its complexity, its excitement as well as its frustration. What a pity the book never really achieved its intended outcome: civil service correspondence is as incomprehensible as ever to anyone who hasn't a first class honours degree in English . . . and even to most who have.

Gowers writes, "Professional writers realise that they cannot hope to affect their readers precisely as they wish without care and practice in the proper use of words. The need for the official to take pains is even greater, for if what the professional writer has written is wearisome and obscure the reader can toss the book aside and read no more, but only at his peril can he so treat what the official has tried to tell him."

When one considers that *Plain Words* was first published in the 1940s it seems incredible that Gowers could have come up with so much sensible advice that it has taken some linguists more than five decades to accept. And that, despite the fact that much of what Gowers proposed had been suggested by others centuries earlier. It would seem that in the area of language people tend to cling to outmoded concepts long after they have outlived any justification they may have had in origin.

A pair of examples. First - **Preposition At End**

Gowers writes: "It was, I believe, Dryden who invented the rule that prepositions must not be used to end a sentence with. No one else of importance has ever observed it, and it is now exploded. Whether a preposition should be put at the end of a sentence or before the word it governs is a matter of taste in every case, and sometimes taste will give unequivocal guidance. It is said that Mr. Winston Churchill once made this marginal comment against a sentence that clumsily avoided a prepositional ending: "This is the sort of English up with which I will not put". The story is well known of the nurse who performed the remarkable feat of getting four prepositions at the end of a sentence by asking her charge: "What did you choose that book to be read to out of for?" She said what she wanted to say perfectly clearly, in words of one syllable, and what more can one ask?

"But the championship of the sport of preposition-piling seems now to have been wrested from the English nurse by an American poet:

*I lately lost a preposition;
It hid, I thought, beneath my chair
And angrily I cried, 'Perdition
Up from out of in under there'.
Correctness is my vade mecum,
And straggling phrases I abhor,
And yet I wondered, 'What should he come
Up from out of in under for?'^[1]*

Next - **Split Infinitive**

"Too many people have already written too much about this. Of all that I have read on the subject, what I like best is the verdict of Jespersen, a grammarian who was as broad-minded as he was erudite.

"This name is bad because we have many infinitives without to, as 'I made him go'. To therefore is no more an essential part of the infinitive than the definite article is an essential part of a nominative, and no one would think of calling the good man a split nominative."

"Sir Sydney Cockerell has reminded us that Bernard Shaw is on the same side. Sir Sydney wrote to the Listener on the 4th Sept. 1947:

"About forty years ago Bernard Shaw wrote a letter to The Times very much as follows:

““There is a busybody on your staff who devotes a lot of his time to chasing split infinitives. Every good literary craftsman splits his infinitives when the sense demands it. I call for the immediate dismissal of this pedant. It is of no consequence whether he decides to go quickly or quickly to go or to quickly go. The important thing is that he should go at once.””

Clichés

Let us turn now (about time, did you say?) to clichés.

And I will start (where else?) with the definition given by Sir Ernest Gowers: A cliché is “. . . a phrase whose aptness in a particular context when it was first invented has won it such popularity that it has become hackneyed, and is used without thought in contexts where it is no longer apt.”

Eric Partridge, whose Dictionary of Clichés was first published in 1940, and is highly praised by Gowers, writes: ““Haste encourages them, but more often they spring from mental laziness . . . [it is] an outworn commonplace; a phrase . . . that has become so hackneyed that scrupulous speakers and writers shrink from it because they feel that its use is an insult to the intelligence of their auditor or audience, their reader or their public. They range from flyblown phrases (explore every avenue), through sobriquets that have lost all point and freshness (the Iron Duke), to quotations that have become debased currency (cups that cheer but not inebriate), metaphors that are now pointless, and formulas that have become mere counters (far be it from me to . . .).”^[2]

The word cliché is nowadays interpreted as a hackneyed phrase and - by extension - anything that is hackneyed. But what is hackneyed, is what has stood the test of time. It would be unfortunate if we were to ignore the truth behind the statement simply because of over-familiarity with the words themselves. Sam Goldwyn is purported to have said “Let’s have some new clichés”. To Russell Davies is credited: “Any story that begins with a cancerous giraffe stamping on the genitals of its keeper must surely be marked high for cliché-avoidance.” And Winston Churchill denied having said of Anthony Eden (reported in the Daily Mirror): “As far as I can see, you have used every cliché except ‘God is Love’ and ‘Please adjust your dress before leaving.’”

The point about clichés is not that they should be totally shunned, but they should never be employed simply because you are too lazy mentally to search for an original or more appropriate phrase. The cliché may well do an excellent job, but it will never have as satisfactory an effect on a listener or a reader as would a well-constructed sentence deriving from a writer or speaker with confidence in their own ability to produce an original statement.

My own most-hated cliché of the recent past was “At the end of the day . . . “

which seemed to be included in every TV programme, particularly news and documentaries, and was a favourite form of evasion by politicians. It has recently, to my mind, been overtaken by the one-word cliché “Absolutely”. Keep an ear out for the number of times you hear this daily as a response to a question, both in direct conversation and on the radio and TV.

As a footnote to this article, here are some amusing examples of clichés in the movies:

A detective can only solve a case once he has been suspended from duty.

A man will show no pain while taking the most ferocious beating but will wince when a woman tries to clean his wounds.

All bombs are fitted with electronic timing devices with large red readouts so you know exactly when they’re going to go off.

Any lock can be picked by a credit card or a paper clip in seconds. Unless it’s the door to a burning building with a child trapped inside

All beds have special L-shaped cover sheets which reach up to the armpit level on a woman but only to waist level on the man lying beside her.

And a final nod in the direction of Sir Ernest Gowers with his note on adjectives and adverbs: “Cultivate the habit of reserving your adjectives and adverbs to make your meaning more precise, and suspect those that you find yourself using to make it more emphatic.”

^[1] Morris Bishop in the New Yorker, 27th September, 1947.

^[2] Eric Partridge, *Usage and Abusage*, Hamish Hamilton, 1947

Gobbledygook

What is gobbledygook?

There are many definitions. To start with Stuart Chase - the tribute to whom in this issue of Nurturing Potential, sparked off this article - he defined it as the way most writers over-complicate writing to make elementary thoughts hard to understand. He uses government agencies and corporations as examples of people who over-complicate their writing. He writes that “. . . it means using two, or three, or ten words in the place of one, or using a five-syllable word where a single syllable would suffice.”

Sir Ernest Gowers^[1], who has also featured regularly in this series of articles, preferred the term *officialese*. This is logical, given that his book was published as a “guide and reference book to the use of English for official and other purposes”, and that the Oxford English Dictionary defines “*officialese*” as “language supposedly characteristic of officials or official documents, turgid or pedantic official prose”. Charitably, and somewhat uncharacteristically, Gowers writes, in the epilogue to his book: “It is reasonable to attribute those [faults of style] of *officialese* in the main to the peculiar difficulties with which official writers have to contend . . . much of what they write has to be devoted to the almost impossible task of translating the language of the law, which is obscure in order that it may be unambiguous, into terms that are simple and yet free from ambiguity.”

Fowler’s *Modern English Usage* (1998 edition) describes gobbledygook as “official, professional, or pretentious verbiage or jargon”, differentiating it from *officialese* simply by the suggestion that the former is American-English, while the latter is British-English, but adding that the term is now in general use in both forms of the language.

J.K. Rowling has adopted the word gobbledygook to describe the language spoken by goblins in her Harry Potter series of books. Given the ever-increasing popularity of her books, and the ever-decreasing standard of language being taught in our schools, I would hazard the guess that hers might ultimately be regarded as the definitive meaning. What is taken to be progress is sometimes sadly retrograde.

The language invented by comedian Stanley Unwin may also be considered gobbledygook, although it is more generally referred to as *Unwinese*. His career spanned several decades from the late ‘fifties (he died in 2002). Some of his inventions are given below, in the section covering examples of gobbledygook

An amusing aside is that when Lew Grade (Baron Grade), the show business impresario, heard Unwin’s character speaking *Unwinese* in an episode of Gerry Anderson’s puppet series *The Secret Service*, he cancelled the show on the grounds that “people won’t understand it”. The whole point, that they weren’t meant to understand it, being lost on him.

How did the term originate?

Maury Maverick, a Congressman from Texas, made up this word to mean “that terrible, involved, polysyllabic language those government people use down in Washington.”

He used the word in the New York Times Magazine in 1944 while chairing the US Smaller War Plants Committee in Congress, as part of a complaint against the obscure language used by his colleagues. He claimed that he was inspired by the turkey, “always gobbledy gobbling and strutting with ludicrous pomposity.” Its survival demonstrates how clear a need the word met.

This was not the Maverick family’s first impact on the dictionary. Maury’s grandfather, Samuel Maverick, a Texas rancher was the inspiration for the word used for an un-branded animal, since Sam Maverick didn’t brand his own herds. Later it came to be used for an unconventional person, and later still a politician who stands aside from the herd, refusing to conform to the party line.

Some examples of gobbledygook

Appropriately, for this season (this issue being due for publication at the end of December 2004) I shall start with a Unwinism. Stanley Unwin’s advice for those who have overeaten at Christmas was “If you’ve done an overstuffy in the tumloader, finisht the job with a ladleho of brandy butter, then pukeit all the way to the toileybox.”

Stuart Chase quotes a statement from one of Franklin Roosevelt’s presidential speeches: “I see one-third of a nation ill-housed, ill-clad, ill-nourished.” He suggested that standard bureaucratic prose would have substituted: “It is evident that a substantial number of persons within the Continental Boundaries of the United States have inadequate financial resources with which to purchase the products of agricultural communities and industrial establishments. It would appear that for a considerable segment of the population, possible as much as 33.3333* of the total, there are inadequate housing facilities, and an equally significant proportion is deprived of the proper types of clothing and nutriment.”

Stuart Chase, being American and working closely with the President, would naturally look to his words for illustration. In Britain we had our own master of the language in the shape of Winston Churchill. Readers might like to imagine what Chase’s imaginary bureaucrat would have substituted for “Never in the field of human conflict has so much been owed by so many to so few.”

The British author, humorist and member of Parliament, A.P. Herbert actually performed such an exercise in respect of Nelson’s famous phrase, “England expects every man to do his duty”. He substituted: “England anticipates that, as regards the current emergency, personnel will face up to the issues and exercise appropriately the functions allocated to their respective occupational groups.”

An office manager sent this memo to his boss: “Verbal contact with Mr Blank regarding the attached notification of promotion has elicited the attached representation intimating that he prefers to decline the assignment.” [In other words, Mr Blank didn’t want the job.]

A doctor testified at a court trial that one of the parties was suffering from circumorbital haemotoma. [Apparently he had a black eye.]

The Gobbledygook Generator is an amusing internet device for producing meaningless and empty phrases that could help you qualify for a position as a stereotypical consultant. For a bit of fun go to http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/examples/gobbledygook_generator.html and click on the button.

A diversion - The Gobbledygook of Hanoi Hoa Lo

An American citizen who was once fled Vietnam as a refugee, Linh Dui Vo has become a respected poet whose verse may be found at http://www.grtitude.org/for_you_president_reagan.htm simply because of the clever use of the word “gobbledygook”. Its inclusion does not imply sympathy with or opposition to any political statements made therein. And if that sounds like gobbledygook, let me say clearly that I neither agree nor disagree with him. He prefaces the poem with the following words of President Reagan.

“Today freedom-loving people . . . must say, ‘I am a Jew in a world still threatened by anti-Semitism. I’m an Afghan, and I’m a prisoner of the gulag. I’m a refugee in a crowded boat foundering off the coast of Vietnam. I’m a Laotian, a Cambodian, a Cuban, and a Miskito Indian in Nicaragua. I, too, am a . . . victim of totalitarianism.’” —President Ronald Reagan, May 1985.

Avoidance of Gobbledygook

Henry Fowler in an early edition of his *Usage* wrote:

Anyone who wishes to become a good writer should endeavour, before he allows himself to be tempted to more showy qualities, to be direct, simple, brief, vigorous and lucid. this general principle may be translated into general rules in the domain of vocabulary as follows:

Prefer the familiar word to the far-fetched.

Prefer the concrete word to the abstract.

Prefer the single word to the circumlocution.

Prefer the short word to the long.

Prefer the Saxon word to the Romance.

The Plain English Campaign, whose website features the Gobbledygook Generator linked above, added the following injunction which will serve us well as a closing phrase for this article: Please write to inform rather than to impress.

^[1] *The Complete Plain Words* by Sir Ernest Gowers, Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1954.

False Friends

What are linguistical false friends?

False friends is a variant on the expression False cognates, so it is best, perhaps, to start this article with a reminder of what is a cognate.

Cognates are words of different languages that are related. For example, the English to pay and the French payer. These words are cognates because they derive from the same root. Similarly the French venir derives from the Latin venire.

False cognates (false friends) are words that appear to be related, but are not. An example is the Spanish compromiso, which means “promise,” not “compromise”. An extensive list of such false friends is provided at Appendix A to the online article in Issue No. 13 of Nurturing Potential. A few of the more amusing examples are given as a footnote to this article.

The existence of this phenomenon of false cognates is of particular relevance to students of foreign languages, for whom there is inevitably a tendency to presume that the similarity of a foreign word to one in their own language implies that the words have similar meaning. This can lead to confusion.

I recall an experience of my own. Some four decades ago when I had moved to Switzerland a few months in advance of my wife and daughter, I wanted to buy a present for my wife in a small village shop. I tried to explain to the sales assistant that I was seeking to buy a present, but I did not recall the German for “present”, and she spoke neither English nor French (a language in which I was fluent). I nevertheless tried the French “cadeau”, but that evidently made no impression. Then I tried the English alternative “gift” and this struck an instant chord. I inferred from her next question that she wanted to know for whom the gift was intended. So I said; “Mein Frau” - feeling very proud of myself for my German prowess - and was then flabbergasted by her startled reaction. After several seconds more of fruitless attempts at a discussion, I excused myself and left the shop. That evening, in my hotel restaurant, I asked the waiter, with whom I always conversed in French, what was the German word for “cadeau”. “Geschenk,” he replied. “So what is the meaning of Gift?” I asked. “Ah,” he said, “cela veut dire le poison” (“That means poison”). No wonder the sales assistant was taken aback at my confession!

It is worth noting here that had I actually been enquiring in French for poison, I would have risked a different misunderstanding. The masculine French noun, le poison, correctly corresponds to the English “poison”. A simple slip of referring to la poison, however, would refer to a nuisance, a pest, an annoying person. The path to bilingualism is fraught with dangers.

One is, indeed, reminded of another series of real and hypothetical false friends. The words *Präservativ* (German) and *prezerwatywa* (Polish) are derived from

the French *préservatif*, which means both “preservative” and “condom”, though *conservateur* is more frequently used for preservative. It may be of some interest to note that the French expression “*une capote anglaise*” corresponds to the English slang expression “a French letter” - both nations apparently wishing to deny any involvement in the device. But English schoolboy humour relates the story of the Englishman in Paris who learns that his wife has died. He needs to buy a black hat, to complete his mourning outfit. In the department store he approaches the sales assistant and, in his execrable French, asks for “*une capeau noir*”. “Ah,” says the assistant, “Monsieur requires the pharmacie on the second floor. But tell me, monsieur, why must it be black?” “Because,” the Englishman replies, “my wife has died.” “*Ooh la la, ces anglais,*” says the assistant, “*Quelle delicatesse!*” (What sensitivity!)

In fact the origin of the expression “false friends” is believed to be French, dating from 1928 when Koessler and Derocquigny used it in their book *Les Faux Amis ou les Trahisons du Vocabulaire Anglais* (Vulbert) and French/English comparisons have been quite comprehensively catalogued, as, indeed, have German/English and Spanish/English.

But there are also difficulties for people of two quite different nationalities trying to express themselves in English and being confused because the apparent cognates in their two languages have totally dissimilar meanings in English. Or an English person speaking a foreign language quite fluently and then trying to learn a further foreign language where apparent cognates are very false friends. Appendix B gives examples of Swedish and Dutch words which look alike, but are quite different in English.

From false friends to friendly falsehoods

In addition to confusion that may arise between similar words in different languages that in fact have quite different meanings, there are also words that have been incorporated from one language into another and, in the process, may have had their meanings corrupted. Sometimes this is done quite deliberately and the resultant word, phrase or sentence will be given such names as Denglisch, Engleutsch or Germish (for a corruption of English and German), or Franglais (for a mixture of English and French). The advent of the domestic computer has speeded this process up considerably and an example we have seen in German (or Germish) is: “Ich musste den Computer neu booten, weil die Software gecrasht ist” that I am assured is perfectly legitimate use by otherwise fluent native German speakers. It translates as “I had to reboot the computer because the software crashed.

I have heard that the Japanese equivalent of this tendency is known as Engrish. But this may have been offered tongue-in-cheek. Certainly a story was circulated (possibly apocryphally) based on the Japanese difficulty in distinguishing between

the “r” and the “l” sounds, that when the Mitsubishi Corporation had to name a new model of car, it determined on an analogy with the Ford Mustang, and decided to call it the Mitsubishi Stallion. In the event (the story has it that it was a clerical error of mispronunciation) it reached the showrooms as the Mitsubishi Starion. No one was able satisfactorily to explain the meaning of “starion” - so perhaps the story was not apocryphal after all.

There are also words that are borrowed from English and used in other languages, sometimes with the precise meaning they have in English, but sometimes in a way English speakers would not readily recognise or understand. In the first category, we are reminded of the way General de Gaulle in the 1950s had a blitz^[1] on the adoption of so many English words into the French language. He issued explicit instructions to the *Académie Française* to excise them and produce excellent original French replacements of which there were an abundance. For example, he insisted that “pipeline” be replaced by *oleoducte*. Another such word, which is still in vogue in French and is also used in German, is the English word “smoking”, in the sense of a smoking jacket (used widely in Victorian and Edwardian times, but now pretty well extinct!). But it is still commonly heard in Germany and in France, where its meaning corresponds to the English/American dinner jacket or tuxedo.

There is, these days, a fashion in Germany to invent “chic” words based upon English derivations. Thus we have “twen”, “talkmaster”, “dressman” and “fesch” as examples. Few English people would know or even understand the meaning of these pseudo-Anglicisms.

Twen - is someone in their twenties. “He/she is a twen.”

Talkmaster - is a radio or TV talk show host.

Dressman - is a male model.

Fesch - (more Austrian than German in origin) is “natty”, “chic”, “attractive” or “dashing”, and presumably derives from the English “fashionable”.

Here’s another nice example:

The Russians have adopted (adapted?) a German word for barber or hairdresser. The Russian word “*parikmakher*” derives from the German “*Perük(en)macher*” which literally means “wig-maker” which, in English, in turn has been adapted from “(peri)wig-maker”, or “peruke-maker”. The word in fact originates in the Italian “*perrucca*” via the French “*perruque*”. Thus the wig-maker of centuries ago has ended up as the hairdresser of today.

^[1] A nice inadvertent example of a German word being borrowed in English. It was adopted in World War II from the German word blitzkrieg (meaning lightning strike - literally lightning war) and is now part of the English dictionary where it is not even italicised.

Linguistical Humour

Having fun with words

[A collation of articles garnered from several issues of *Nurturing Potential*]

On a visit to America, an aged British lady, wary of slang words, asked her American-born granddaughter: "Promise me that you will not use two words while I am around. One is 'swell' and the other is 'lousy'".
"Why sure, grandma", replied the girl "what are the words."

Winston Churchill, himself a product of mixed British and American parents, once remarked that America and Britain were two countries divided by a common language. The Irish wit Oscar Wilde had his own version of this: "We have many things in common with the Americans except the language".

Many a true word spoken in jest as the adage has it, and the fact is that from common beginnings the English language has taken several different paths in America from those pursued in Britain. It seems somewhat ridiculous that an Englishman in the USA could be accused of "jay-walking" for walking on the pavement rather than the sidewalk; absurd, too, that that same Englishman in the underwear department of a store, asking for a pair of pants, would be directed to the outerwear department to purchase trousers, when what he wanted were shorts. Most embarrassing of all might be a visit to the office supplies department for a rubber and be re-directed to the drugstore.

English, whether British or American, is a living, evolving language. It has evolved principally over the last two or three centuries by the influx of various ethnic groups and the cross-fertilisation of cultural differences. In America in particular it was necessary to develop a means of quick and easy communication as the waves of immigrants flooded the country. Noah Webster, who compiled the first major American English dictionary, far from reluctant to accept or acknowledge this "corruption" of the language, actually welcomed it and approved of the idea of America developing its own language distinct from the language of the country from which America had won its independence.

But even Webster might have qualms about some of the directions the language has taken, and particularly in slang usage, so that something that is praiseworthy and attractive may be simultaneously described as "hot" or "cool".

A language teacher addressed her class on the double negative. "Two negatives make a positive," she said, "but it's interesting to note that two positives do not make a negative." "Yeah, right!" commented one of her students.

And in both versions of the language one has to marvel at the weird contradictions that we all accept unquestioningly, yet do not stand up to logical analysis. How, for instance, do you explain a house burning up as it burns down, or a form being filled in by being filled out, or an alarm clock that goes off by going on? How is it that writers write, but grocers don't groce? If the plural of tooth is teeth, why isn't the plural of booth beeth? If teachers taught, why didn't preachers praught? How can oversight effectively be the opposite of overseen?

These are the apparent contradictions that make the English language so stimulating to students of linguistics for whom English is their native tongue. But it can play merry hell with someone who is teaching English as a foreign language and prove totally bewildering to the students whose language is so dissimilar, with sentence structure and grammar so at variance, and with a complete lack of comprehension of what passes for humour in English.

The Use of Humour in Teaching English as a Foreign Language

It ought to be axiomatic that if we can make someone laugh, then we will be well on the road to achieving rapport with that person and to removing barriers to communication and comprehension. Alas, laughter is no guarantee of understanding. Frequently, indeed, it denotes precisely the opposite and reveals an embarrassing failure to understand.

Ricardo San Martin Vadillo, a teacher of English as a Foreign Language in Spain, in an article spotted on the internet, states that he has been using humour as a way of promoting student interaction in the classroom. Much literature on the subject, he suggests, stresses the importance of humour as a means of enhancing student motivation to learn English as well as reducing student anxiety.

In *Learn English with a Smile* (P. Leal, 1993) the author gives as one useful means of teaching English the device of making the students listen to and understand the punchline of a joke. Another suggestion is to translate Spanish jokes into English. Both of these suggestions are fraught with difficulty as anyone who has listened to a joke translated from a foreign language will have discovered. English jokes involving word-play, as so many do, would prove particularly difficult. But another list of advantages (deFelice 1996) has some merit. These include the experience that jokes are liked by the students and therefore motivate them; they induce a relaxed atmosphere in the classroom; they are usually short enough not to demand over-long attention; they present useful cultural aspects of the language; they are easy to tell and usually easy to understand; they integrate psychological, psycholinguistic, sociological and strategic components; and they employ the three skills of reading, speaking and listening.

"Classrooms in which laughter is welcome help bring learning to life." -

Dickinson, D. *Humor and the Multiple Intelligence*, 2001

Here is another list of benefits of humour in teaching English:[2]

- Creates a positive classroom environment
- Reduces anxiety
- Encourages learner involvement
- Holds learners' attention
- Fosters intrinsic motivation
- Promotes comprehension and retention
- Fosters cognitive development
- Manages undesirable behaviour
- Builds self-confidence
- Enhances quality of learners' and teachers' lives

There are, of course, many excuses made by teachers for not using humour in a language classroom. Frequently they are unwilling to take a perceived risk, protesting that they are "unable to tell a joke", or that they "don't wish to appear foolish". They may also express fear that it could lead to loss of control and encourage disruptive behaviour by the students. But such excuses merely reveal, as a rule, that the teacher simply does not know how to use humour effectively in the classroom.

"So long as there's a bit of a laugh going, things are all right. As soon as this infernal seriousness, like a greasy sea, heaves up, everything is lost."
-D.H.Lawrence

Humour in the classroom, however, has a number of further advantages. It encourages participation by those students who, for whatever reason (and it is usually shyness), do not ordinarily participate fully in class activities, to feel less vulnerable and less exposed. Because it reduces anxiety and stress, it encourages students to take risks in the second language without fear of criticism and ridicule.

It is important for the teacher to plan the lessons thoroughly and to ensure that the examples of humour will be readily appreciated by the students, whether verbal or by means of cartoons. Here are two examples:

1. A schoolboy runs home from school and arrives in the kitchen, breathless. His mother asks him why he's exhausted, as he usually comes home on a bus. The boy says:

"I ran after the bus and saved my money."

She smacks his ear, and tells him to run after a taxi next time - and save even more money.

This is a typical international joke. Its humour depends on something sounding possible, but being completely impossible. It is the sort of joke that will be readily accessible to students of any native language.

2. A man takes his very big dog to the veterinarian. He tells the vet that the dog's eyes look unhealthy. The vet picks up the dog and takes a good look at the dog's eyes, and says:

"I'm going to have to put him down."

"Why? Just because he can't see well?"

"No, because he's too heavy."

This joke depends on a phrase having two meanings. When a vet says he will have to put an animal down he means put it to sleep, permanently or kill it. Not just put it back down on the floor.

In Switzerland, where there are four official languages, the Swiss are naturally very aware of the need to communicate in a way that will ensure total comprehension. As someone who lived for more than three years in a small town in the heart of the German-speaking part of Switzerland I know only too well how often they fail in this endeavour. Particularly with the use of humour which, in my experience, was always at a very basic level. Innuendo, allusion and obliquity was generally lost on them. So it was particularly interesting for me to discover that the Kantonsschule Luzern has provided specific examples of English humour to illustrate their own belief in its benefit in teaching English as a foreign language. Here is their list of jokes which are suggested as perfect examples of the type of basic humour that might appeal to people of any age and any nationality.

"My wife's an angel."

"Really? Mine's still alive."

"I bet I can make you speak like a Red Indian."

"How?"

"That's right!"

A visitor to Ireland asked a farm labourer for the time.

"Sure, it's twelve o'clock, your honour," answered the Irishman.

"Only twelve?" asked the traveller doubtfully. "I thought it was much later than that."

"Oh, no, Sir, it never gets later than that in these parts."

"How's that?"

"Well, Sir, after twelve o'clock it goes back to one."

A small, thin man walked into a pub and shouted angrily, "Who painted my car bright purple?"

A huge man with big muscles got up and said frighteningly, "I did."

"Oh," said the small man, "I thought I'd let you know that the first coat's dry."

Irishman to St Peter at the gate of Heaven: "You must be bored with your job showing people in year after year, century after century?"

"You must remember, here in Heaven things are measured differently. A million years are but as one minute; a million pounds are but as one shilling."

Irishman: "Could you give me a shilling, Holy Saint?"

St Peter: "Certainly - in a minute!"

A very rich Texan was sitting in a bar in Dublin and as he got drunker so he got louder and more boastful about his home state.

"In Texas", he said arrogantly, "a man can get on a train on Monday morning, eat and sleep on that train all through Monday and all through Tuesday. And when he gets off that train on Wednesday, he's still in Texas."

The barman looked up and shook his head, "Sure, it's terrible," he said. "We've got slow trains in Ireland too."

"Margaret, you mustn't use 'a' before a plural - you say 'a' horse, not 'a' horses."

"But, Miss, the vicar's always saying 'a-men'."

The family seated in a restaurant had finished their dinner when the father called over the waiter.

"Yes, Sir?" said the waiter.

"My son has left quite a lot of meat on his plate," explained the father. "Could you give me a bag so that I can take it home for the dog?"

"Gosh, Dad!" exclaimed the excited boy. "Have we got a dog then?"

Drowning man: "Help, I can't swim!"

Passer-by: "So what? I can't play the piano, but I don't shout about it."

They are, however, typical of the humour the Swiss apply to their own Appenzeller people, just as the English might ascribe them to the Irish, the Dutch to the Belgians, and the Americans to the Poles. In other words, it seems every nationality has some ethnic butt for the more simple types of jokes.

More Fun With Words – or have you got the right message?

Readers will certainly be familiar with some of the more common forms of linguistic puzzles or mistakes, but I hope that we will succeed here in bringing some new examples to your attention, or a different way of relating to some “old friends”.

SPOONERISMS

I doubt if any of you have failed to be amused, for instance, by some of the more outrageous of the slips of the tongue attributed (often apocryphally) to Dr. Spooner, of which, perhaps, “Three cheers for our queer dean” is the most frequently quoted. Equally familiar is the conversion of “A well-oiled bicycle” into “A well-boiled icicle”. For more information and samples check out http://fun-with-words.com/spoon_example.html.

MALAPROPISMS

And we must all have heard, in our school days, of Richard Brinsley Sheridan’s Mrs. Malaprop (The Rivals) and her malapropisms. For instance, she describes someone as “the pineapple of perfection”. Another example that pleases me (not from the play): “He did it of his own fruition.”

PUNS

Sharing with sarcasm the reputation for being the lowest form of wit; greeted habitually with more groans than laughs, puns are, nevertheless, the earliest form of wordplay embraced by children. The ingenuous style of humour they portray remains typical of puns regardless of the age of the raconteur and may be one reason for the groans that greet them. Or it may be that the audience is simply deploring the fact that they were “beaten to the punch”. As the acerbic actor/musician, the late Oscar Levant, put it: “A pun is the lowest form of humour - if you didn’t think of it first”. Perhaps we need to give our Inner Child more of an airing and be less groan up.

Puns were the mainstay of the comedians who used to keep audiences entertained between acts in the old time Music Hall. “I say, I say, I say,” was the habitual introduction to a pun. Just to ensure that the audience braced themselves for the laugh to follow. (No wonder “vaudeville is dead”.) “I say, I say, I say . . . My missus went to the West Indies.” “Jamaica?” “No, she went of her own free will.”

But puns pre-date Music Hall by many centuries and there is a rich tradition of such fun with words in English literature. Chaucer was fond of occasional pieces of word play; and Shakespeare couldn’t resist them. Charles Lamb, a notorious

punster, considered the worst puns to be the best puns: “It is a pistol let off at the ear; not a feather to tickle the intellect.” But the English poet who is probably most renowned for the use of puns, and the clever way in which he introduced them appropriately into his verses, was Thomas Hood.

Ben Battle was a soldier bold
And used to war's alarms
But a cannonball took off his legs;
So he laid down his arms.
- and -
For here I leave my second leg
And the Forty-second foot.
- and -
His death, which happened in his berth,
At forty-odd befell:
They went and told the sexton, and
The sexton tolled the bell.

Here are some clever examples - some are genuine, some undoubtedly apocryphal, but I don't know which is which. General Napier is alleged to have sent a one-word message after capturing the Indian province of Sind in 1843: “Peccavi” (Latin for I have sinned). The aforementioned Thomas Hood is held to have responded, when an undertaker offered his services: “He is trying to urn a lively Hood.” Hogarth (may have) sent out a dinner invitation which pictured a knife, a fork, and a pie, with three Greek letters: eta, beta, pi.

ANAGRAMS

Anagrams can provide a constant source of amusement and entertainment. CAT and ACT can be the basis for a game played with children at a very early age. Dr. Seuss discovered the fun that children get from such playing with words, to his own financial gain, and to his millions of young readers' eternal pleasure.

As adults we are able to derive similar amusement from some awesomely appropriate rearrangement of phrases: A shoplifter converts to has to pilfer. Eleven plus two absurdly but logically can be changed to twelve plus one. Some classic examples may be found at <http://www.wordsmith.org/anagram/hof.html> and, if you want to create your own anagrams, you can do so at <http://www.wordsmith.org/anagram/index.html>.

SPELLING ERRORS

Computer spell checkers have elevated these to a new art form. Unless we “manually” check the corrections of the spell checker, we could end up with some very strange and potentially embarrassing substitutions. For example “I suggest we give him the monjeý,” (the last word a typing error for money), could end up as “I suggest we give him the monkey.” Or “the doctor felt the man’s purse and said nothing could be done for him..” An oft-repeated piece of verse by that most prolific of poets – Anon – provides an excellent example;

Eye halve a spelling chequer
It came with my pea sea
It plainly marques four my revue
Miss steaks eye kin knot sea.
Eye strike a key and type a word
And weight four it two say
Weather eye am wrong oar write
It shows me strait a weigh
As soon as a mist ache is maid
it nose bee for two long
And eye can put the error rite
Its rare lea ever wrong.
Eye have run this poem threw it
I am shore your pleased two no
Its letter perfect awl the weigh
My chequer tolled me sew.

ALLITERATION (and tongue twisters)

Alliteration is the repetition of initial or beginning consonant sounds, as in the phrase “strong gongs groaning as the guns boom far.”[1] This technique is used most frequently in verse where it adds both to the rhythm of a poem and to its mood. It is not to be confused with assonance which is the repetition of vowel sounds in stressed syllables to achieve partial rhyme, as in the phrase “brave ladies live not in vain”.

Some excellent examples of alliteration in verse may be seen in Alaric Alexander Watts’s poem The Siege of Belgrade, where every line alliteratively goes through the alphabet. Thus:

An Austrian army awfully arrayed
Boldly by battery besieged Belgrade
(and so on, including the X’s and Z’s).

Alliterative statements are commonly referred to as tongue twisters, of which the two most frequently used by children are “Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled pepper” and “She sells seashells by the sea shore.” But tongue twisters are another form of word game that encourages vast output through the medium of the Internet. A rather amusing one will serve as an example:

Mr. See owned a saw.
And Mr. Soar owned a seesaw.
Now, See’s saw sawed Soar’s seesaw
Before Soar saw See,
Which made Soar sore.
Had Soar seen See’s saw
Before See sawed Soar’s seesaw,
See’s saw would not have sawed Soar’s seesaw.
So See’s saw sawed Soar’s seesaw.
But it was sad to see Soar so sore just because
See’s saw sawed Soar’s seesaw.

And if your appetite for them is not yet jaded, try: http://fun-with-words.com/tong_poems.html

PALINDROMES

Then there are palindromes. In their most simple form these are words that read the same backwards and forwards. NUN, EYE, MADAM, RADAR, RACECAR. The fun comes from expanding the simple words into phrases or sentences. An old favourite is MADAM I’M ADAM. There are people who apparently spend their lives (or at least all their spare time) in inventing palindromes for the simple pleasure of contributing them to internet language forums. If you are Finnish, however, you do not need to go to such lengths; the Finnish word SOLUTOMAATTIMITTAAMOTULOS, means “the result from a measurement laboratory for tomatoes”. I somehow doubt that it has ever been used seriously in Finland.

Check out more palindromes at http://www.fun-with-words.com/palin_example.html.

PANGRAMS

A pangram is a series of words that contains all the letters of the alphabet. Without fear of contradiction, I would suggest that The quick brown fox jumps over a lazy dog is the most widely known of such devices, and it is one that has traditionally been associated with QWERTY keyboard touch-typing learners – from well before the term QWERTY keyboard came into general usage.

Much of the fun associated with pangrams derives from attempts to produce the shortest possible meaningful sentences using all the letters of the alphabet. To save you the trouble of counting, I will tell you that the example cited above contains 33 letters. Using a mere 31 letters will produce Jackdaws love my big sphinx of quartz. There are, in fact, examples that comprise only the 26 letters of the alphabet, but I personally find them too contrived. My personal preference amongst these is for the somewhat ribald TV quiz drag nymphs blow JFK cox. Increasing the number of letters used by a mere three letters, however, produces the much more intelligible Quick zephyrs blow, vexing daft Jim.

Further examples of pangrams may be found at <http://www.rinkworks.com/words/pangrams.shtml>.

OXYMORONS

The figure of speech known as an oxymoron is less obviously amusing than the Spoonerisms, Malapropisms and Pangrams, but is a much more subtle and, in some respects, more satisfying device for having fun with words. An oxymoron is the conjunction of two contradictory words into a single phrase. Examples include deafening silence, unbiased opinion, clearly confused. There is scope here for much subtlety and cleverness, as is apparent in: Microsoft Works, military intelligence, genuine imitation, and Hell's Angels.

Conceivably the definitive oxymoron list may be found at <http://www.ethanwiner.com/oxymoron.html>.

MNEMONICS

A mnemonic is a linguistic device which acts as an aid to memory. There are various forms of these devices one of which is a rhyme as in this device to recall the length of each month:

Thirty days hath September,
April, June, and November;
All the rest have thirty-one
Excepting February alone:
Which has but twenty-eight I fear,
Yet twenty-nine in each leap year.

Another rhyming mnemonic enables one to recall “pi” to several decimal places:

Sir, I bear a rhyme excelling
In mystic verse
And magic spelling . . .

The number of letters in each word corresponds to the number of digits; the comma replaces the decimal point. Thus: 3.14159265358. The verse actually continues to 31 decimal places!

Another device is to use the initial letters of a simple phrase to recall the words they replace. For example, to recall the order in which the nine planets of our solar system are situated (in distance from the sun),

My Very Easy Method: Just Set Up Nine Planets

corresponds to

Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, Pluto.

And to recall the colours of the rainbow, in similar fashion, Richard Of York Gave Battle In Vain. While most piano students, I would suggest, have learned that Every Good Boy Deserves Favour . . . and Good Boys Deserve Favour Always to recall the notes of the piano keys over which the right hand and left hand fingers should be poised.

ESPRIT D'ESCALIER

The French call it *l'esprit d'escalier*, literally “staircase wit”. It’s what you think of saying when it’s too late to say it – literally - as you are walking down the staircase. I’m sure we’ve all experienced it sometime. “Now why didn’t I say . . . ?”

I recall it being defined as “Repartee: or what a person thinks of saying after he becomes a departee.”

Of course, there may be others who leave with the thought: “God! Did I really say that?”, and the regret that they had not swallowed their words. (Perhaps we could call it escalator wit!)

A notable example of this was Dan Quayle (Dan who??!) who was prone to making statements such as: “If we do not succeed, we run the risk of failure.”

Now that was definitely the remark of a departee.

^[1] From Lepanto by G.K. Chesterton.

Anyone for Finnczech?

I read an article some years ago, when I was trying to learn Finnish, and have recently discovered some notes I made at the time.

It was suggested that Finnish was the obvious language to become internationally accepted, in the role that was intended for Esperanto. This seems an odd assertion, but some fairly cogent reasons were put forward.

It is a very logical language. The rules are absolute and apply in all situations. Except for exceptions.

It is very mellisonant. That is, it sounds good. This is attributed to the preponderance of vowels in its construction, being far more melodic than the ugly sounding consonants of some other tongues – of which more anon.

It is a concise language. One Finnish word may express the meaning of several English words. Why, for example, go to the lengths of saying “the result obtained from a measurement laboratory for tomatoes”, when you need simply say “solutomaatimittaamotulos”? And just look at that wealth of sweet-sounding vowels. Or why waste time with saying “the committee that takes care of negotiations concerning the truce” when you can use a simple little word like “aseleponeuvottelutoimikunta”?

Finnish has better and longer swear words than almost any other language.

Furthermore, it is difficult enough to learn to serve as an excellent confidence-booster should you ever succeed in learning it. If you can learn Finnish, you can learn anything.

Also you will also be able to enjoy the feeling of superiority, knowing that there are many Finns who still do not understand their language.

Let us examine the language a little closer.

Nouns and cases.

There are no articles in Finnish. Think how that simplifies things. Talo, for example, means both A house and The house.

On the other hand, there are 13 cases in Finnish which is much more precise than having to worry about whether you should be using the definite or the indefinite article.

The Finnish cases comprise Nominative, Accusative, Genitive, Essive, Partitive, Translative, Inessive, Elative, Illative, Adessive, Allative. Comitative and Instructive. The great advantage is that these simply affect word endings. So instead of having to worry about whether you use “the” or “a” or “in” or “to” or “from” etc., you simply learn the nouns and then mumble the endings. Nobody will know whether you have spoken them correctly or not. Anyway most of the people you are speaking to will probably not understand the cases themselves.

Incidentally, when I was living in Finland in the late 1960s and trying to make myself understood, I was given a piece of advice that I have never forgotten. “If you are speaking English to someone who doesn’t understand you, simply raise your voice. Finnish people are very polite. No one will complain. If they still do not understand, raise your voice again. In due course, someone will pass by, who will understand, and will translate for you.”

I also remember trying to find a mnemonic to help me learn the numerals. This was a little difficult. The numerals are as follows (and please note that the “y” in Finnish (and Scandinavian languages) is pronounced like “oo” in English):

1. yksi
2. kaksi
3. kolme
4. neljä
5. viisi
6. kuusi
7. seitsemän
8. kahdeksan
9. yhdeksän
10. kymmenen

Finally I recognised only three points of similarity. “Kolme” and “three” each have five letters. “Viisi” and “five” each have “v” and “i”. “seitsemän” and “seven” both begin with an “s”. This was not enough to implant the first ten numbers in Finnish in my brain. I did subsequently, however, manage to commit “Kaksi” to memory, when I found that saying “kaksi taksi” gave me much amusement. But how often does one have to hail two taxis simultaneously?

Reverting to the preponderance of vowels in the Finnish language, it has been suggested that some of the vowels might conveniently be exported to the Czech Republic whose language is notably short of vowels, but overburdened with consonants. For example the words *zmrzl*, *ztvrdl*, *scvrnkl*, and *’tvrthrst* have no vowels at all, although the consonants “l” and “r” serve as sonorants.

Indeed it has even been suggested that Finland might import some of these Czech consonants on a “barter” deal. But it is hard to see any Finn willing to use the word “*zrmzlina*” for ice-cream, while Czechs might be even more suspicious of a language that calls it “*jäätelöä*”.

I hope I’ve succeeded in convincing you.

ooo 000 ooo

Having re-read the somewhat tongue-in-cheek article about Finnish and the possibility of a special relationship with the Czech language, I felt it would be appropriate to give a summary of the precise relationship between them.

In fact, the short answer is that there is none.

If one were to examine the relationships between the various languages in the Indo-European Language Family, it would be noted that whereas Czech is in the fairly logical group of Balto-Slavic tongues, alongside the equally logical Latvian, Lithuanian, Bulgarian, Serbo-Croat, Russian, etc. there are some apparently illogical omissions.

These include Finnish, Hungarian and Estonian. The reason for this is that these three share their linguistic origins within the Ural-Altaic family of tongues. Even more surprisingly is that this group includes Japanese and Mongol. The only explanation I have ever heard for this peculiarity is that they all derived from people living to the east of the Urals who, many centuries ago, migrated in two directions. One group, moving eastwards, eventually settled in Mongolia and Japan. The other, moving westwards, split again, half settling in the Magyar region and half in Finland/Estonia.

However it does appear surprising, at first glance, that all these languages do share the same mellifluous preponderance of vowels.

The Gender Agenda

“If a woman is swept off a ship into the water, the cry is ‘Man overboard!’ If she is killed by a hit-and-run driver, the charge is ‘manslaughter.’ If she is injured on the job, the coverage is ‘workmen’s compensation.’ But if she arrives at a threshold marked ‘Men Only,’ she knows the admonition is not intended to bar animals or plants or inanimate objects. It is meant for her.”^[1]



“I give up. What are you trying to tell me?” [Illustration by Yaron Livay from *Peace of Mind* is *Piece of Cake*, Crown Books, 1998]

Language tends to reflect and embody social influences, and possibly the most profound changes to have occurred to the English language in the past 60 years have been concerned with political correctness, in particular where it relates to gender.

Consider the impact of increased sensitivity to the pronoun “he,” used to refer to both males and females. Traditionally the pronouns he, him, and his have been used as generic or gender-neutral singular pronouns, as in: A novelist should write about what he knows best and No one seems to take any pride in his work anymore.

Since the early 20th century, however, this usage has come under increasing criticism for reflecting and perpetuating gender stereotyping. Defenders of the traditional usage have argued that the masculine pronouns he, his, and him can be used generically to refer to men and women. This analysis of the generic use of he is linguistically doubtful. If he were truly a gender-neutral form, we would expect that it could be used to refer to the members of any group containing both men and women. But in fact the English masculine form is an odd choice when it refers to a female member of such a group.

There is something plainly disconcerting about sentences such as Each of the students was praised for his achievement in the examinations, when applied to a classroom of both male and female students. Thus he is not really a gender-neutral pronoun; rather, it refers to a male who is to be taken as the representative member of the group. The only truly gender-neutral pronoun is it. But how would we react to the statement: Each of the students was praised for its achievements . . . ? We can have no quarrel with the statement Each animal

behaved in its customary manner; but would take exception to Each person behaved in its customary manner. Yet what is a person but a human animal?

Ever since political correctness impinged upon public awareness, speakers and writers became more inclined to find ways of avoiding the accusation of gender-bias. Various strategies were adopted to replace the generic he/him/his. One such device is to change to the plural, using they, their or them in place of he/his/him. This may satisfy the politician, but is unlikely to appeal to the grammarian. Another solution is to use compound and coordinate forms such as he/she or he or she. But this can be cumbersome in sustained use.

In some cases, the generic pronoun can simply be dropped or changed to an article with no change in meaning. The sentence Every student handed in his assignment could simply be expressed as Every student handed in an assignment. But even more simply, and undoubtedly more acceptable, is to change the entire phrase from the singular to the plural. Thus All the students handed in their assignments fulfils the dual requirements of complete and grammatical comprehensibility and political correctness.

Here are some of the proposed variations on “he, him, his” that have been introduced during the past 150 years. [Source: American Heritage Dictionary]. Pre-1850: ne, nis, nim. 1850: hiser; 1858: en. 1864: thon, thons; hi, hes, hem; le, lis, lim; hiser, himer, ip, ips. 1888: ir, iro, im. 1890: e, es, em. 1912: ha, hez, hem; hesh, hizzer, himmer. 1935: himorher. 1938: se, sim, sis. 1945: hse. 1970: she, heris, herim. co, cos. ve, vis, ver. 1972: tey, term, tem. shis, shim, shims, shimsself. ze, zim, zees, zeese. per, pers. 1973: na, nan, naself. s/he. him/er. his-or-her. 1974: en, es, ar. hisorher. herorhis. 1975: ey, eir, em. 1977: e, ris, rim. em, ems. 1978: ae. hir. 1979: et, ets, etself. shey, sheir, sheirs. 1980: it. 1981: heshe, hes, hem. 1984: hann. 1985: herm. Post 1985: har.

According to the American Heritage Dictionary, these artificial epicene pronouns have been largely ignored by the general English-speaking public, and the project to supplement the English pronoun system has proved to be an ongoing exercise in futility. Epicene pronouns have enjoyed some success in certain forms of writing, especially science fiction. Some internet discussion groups also make a habit of using these pronouns.

It would seem that we will have to persevere with traditional grammatical precision at the expense of political correctness, or discard grammar in favour of a gender agenda. The most likely such forms that will remain in use will no doubt be the use of the plural they, them and their regardless of number or gender, or the unwieldy s/he and his/her, and him or her. Additionally the use of the pronoun one may be a useful avoidance strategy.

Our plea would be to take the trouble to seek out and use such avoidance tactics as rephrasing one’s writing in order legitimately to use plural pronouns.

Some comments

Here are some interesting and amusing comments on the subject of political correctness and gender issues:

First from Doris Lessing ^[2]

Does Political Correctness have a good side? Yes, it does, for it makes us re-examine attitudes, and that is always useful. The trouble is that, with all popular movements, the lunatic fringe so quickly ceases to be a fringe, the tail begins to wag the dog. For every woman or man who is quietly and sensibly using the idea to examine our assumptions, there are 20 rabble-rousers whose real motive is desire for power over others, no less rabble-rousers because they see themselves as anti-racists or feminists or whatever.

Secondly from Golda Meier ^[3]

A story - which as far as I know, is all it was - once went the rounds of Israel to the effect that Ben-Gurion described me as the 'only man' in his cabinet. What amused me about it was that obviously he (or whoever invented the story) thought that this was the greatest possible compliment that could be paid to a woman. I very much doubt that any man would have been flattered if I had said about him that he was the only woman in the government

One of the strangest stories of all is that of a woman who was elected to the National Academy of Sciences in the late seventies:

The scroll that geneticist Vivian Davidson received from the Academy had her name engraved on it, and then went on to announce that Vivian Davidson was being honoured for 'his' accomplishments, and that 'he' was now entitled, and 'he' could, and 'he' should, etc. She was so amazed at all the 'he's' that she sent a letter to the Academy inquiring whether the source of the problem might be that the engraver was British and had taken Vivian for a man's name, or was it perhaps that the printing process was lagging behind the process of election of women to the Academy. The letter she received back from the Academy secretary (a man) was an angry one informing her that she was the first person ever to complain, the scroll was an honour, its plate had been struck in 1868 [sic] by Abraham Lincoln, and it had a historic value the Academy was not about to tamper with.

At the next Academy meeting in Washington, Vivian raised the matter of the scroll's wording with some of the other women scientists. Each one said she had never noticed the use of 'he' instead of 'she' on the scroll. 'That's probably true,' Vivian said sadly. 'They're so grateful to be allowed into the club, they wouldn't dream of making waves. In all likelihood they haven't noticed' ^[4]

In 1972, two sociologists at Drake University, Joseph Schneider and Sally Hacker,

decided to test the hypothesis that man is generally understood to embrace woman. Some three hundred college students were asked to select from magazines and newspapers a variety of pictures that would appropriately illustrate the different chapters of a sociology textbook being prepared for publication. Half the students were assigned chapter headings like “Social Man”, “Industrial Man”, and “Political Man”. The other half was given different but corresponding headings like “Society”, “Industrial Life”, and “Political Behavior”. Analysis of the pictures selected revealed that in the minds of students of both sexes use of the word man evoked, to a statistically significant degree, images of males only — filtering out recognition of women’s participation in these major areas of life — whereas the corresponding headings without man evoked images of both males and females. In some instances the differences reached magnitudes of 30 to 40 per cent. The authors concluded, ‘This is rather convincing evidence that when you use the word man generically, people do tend to think male, and tend not to think female.’
[5]

Some female aphorisms, epithets and causerie

I find it reassuring that stand-up female comedians follow the same pattern as ethnically identifiable men, in that it is perfectly acceptable for Jewish comedians to tell jokes about Jews, for the Irish to tell jokes about the Irish, for black comedians to tell jokes about blacks. Here are some examples of female humour that follow a similar pattern.

It’s not true I had nothing on. I had the radio on. (Marilyn Monroe)

I’m a wonderful housekeeper. Every time I get divorced, I keep the house. (Zsa Zsa Gabor)

Marriage is a great institution, but I’m not ready for an institution yet. (Mae West)

One more drink, and I’ll be under the host. (Dorothy Parker)

I hate to spread rumours, but what else can one do with them? (Amanda Lear)

My grandmother started walking five miles a day when she was sixty. She’s ninety-three today and we don’t know where the hell she is. (Ellen Degeneres)

My grandmother was a very tough woman. She buried three husbands. Two of them were just napping. (Rita Rudner)

I personally believe we developed language because of our deep inner need to complain. (Jane Wagner)

They say you should say nothing about the dead unless it’s good. He’s dead. Good. (Moms Mabley)

Footnotes

- ^[1] Alma Graham, *How to Make Trouble: The Making of a Nonsexist Dictionary*, Ms., December 1973, p. 16.
- ^[2] Doris Lessing in a talk delivered at a Rutgers University conference in Newark New Jersey in 1992 on intellectuals and social change in Eastern Europe.
- ^[3] Meir, Golda. *My Life*, New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1976, page 108.
- ^[4] Vivian Gornick, *Women in Science: 100 Journeys into the Territory*. New York: Touchstone (Simon & Schuster), 1990. Short, anecdotal profiles of over a hundred female scientists, mostly from an earlier generation.
- ^[5] Miller, Casey and Kate Swift, *Words and Women*. New York: Doubleday, Anchor Press, 1977.
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Parodies, Verse and Doggerel

Parodies, Verse and Doggerel

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The selection of verse that follows is taken from output that covers more than sixty years and is, ipso facto, very varied in style and quality. I have always been most pleased by my parodies, and The Song of Hiawalpole is my particular pride - especially such appropriate transferences as "A Bargery in Autumn", a "Stephen winter Woolley ", and "in the bosom of Gwen Forrest". I was also very happy with its two performances to musical accompaniment for the Barnet Thirty-Plus Group.

ONE LINE OF PROSE

(With acknowledgement to Dorothy Parker
- One Perfect Rose)

A single line he sent me. Without sweat.
And splendidly his messenger he chose.
By AOL, no blue-black ink still wet.
Just perfect prose.

I knew the language of the true insiders.
“My ballpen leaks,” it said, “I’ll thus dispose
This missive by my internet providers” -
Just perfect prose.

Why is it no one ever sent me yet
One perfect verse of love, do you suppose?
Ah no, it’s always just my luck to get
A line of prose.

SILENCE

Silence
and for a brief instance
the world stands still,
and the roving spirit
crests the hill of solitude.

And then the dripping tap of memory
fills the mind with noise.
The sound of past occurrences,
blaring of triumphant hopes,
the muted strains of profitless experience;
the terrible maddening noise.

You grapple with remembrance
without success,
in efforts to retain oblivion.
Amidst the crescendo
and mounting turmoil of emotions
a small voice says "It was not so",
but soon its tone is smothered.

You feel that life is slipping from your grasp
and fight a losing battle with despair,
till finally your will is overcome.

And then –
silence.

Longmoor, July 1949

THE STATESMAN

Prosaic'ly he plods the path of peace,
Avoiding pitfalls when the dusk is nigh
By treading warily. Does not release
In gay abandonment a heartfelt sigh
Such as the vagabond of Nature's road
Permits himself when shades of darkness fall;
For he has not to carry such a load,
And is but one of many that make all.

Longmoor, 1948

RITA

She came and it was light:
The light of countless twinkles in a champagne glass.
She spoke and all was bright:
The brightness of the sunset in a narrow pass.

What matters how she came or what she said?
Of small importance, now, the cause of strife.
But when she went I wished that I were dead,
For all the light departed from my life.

Longmoor 1948

AIR RAID

With breathless bewilderment and awe
Stood watchers, petrified, with bated breath,
Perceiving beauty born of slaughter,
The grim announcer of impending death.

 Their eyes were roving, sleep-endowed,
 From scarlet flame to steep-banked cloud,
 Were seeking, probing, ceaselessly
 For what they were afraid to miss
 And even more afraid to see.

 Then each man's heart was filled with dread;
 That hornet-drone was overhead,
 And suddenly the atmosphere
 Was pregnant with the full-blown seed
 Of unpremeditated fear.

The amber glow in stealthy silence
Arose relentlessly with fearful might,
Imbued the air with ghostly beauty
Dissolving softly into patient night.

Longmoor, 1948

REFUGE

Morning came.
The sun, though wanly yet,
From out the clouds did creep,
And chilled but more the coldness in each heart.

Night had passed.
Their craft its course had set;
They roused themselves from sleep,
Despairingly aware this was the start.

*** *** *** ***

And then within their breasts a wondrous joy:
“We are alive. Our pained heartbeat
Is Freedom’s precious blood;
Though fugitive, we plant our feet
On this uncertain road.
Reprieve, we pray, these victims of Hanoi.”

But what inexorable dream did drive
Them to this pass? Utopia . . . ?
Can desperation so
Produce a mass myopia?
Or did they simply show
A crass and rude desire to stay alive?

Freedom they sought and yet from freedom fled;
Their sorrow spent, alike their gold,
(Why give up gold for strife?)
Bewilderment assailed the old,
The rest were for their life
Content, who measured wealth by rice and bread.

This is no refuge for the older men.
Here Mammon reigns. Who dares offend
Its promissory trap?
The tree retains a bitter blend
That yet within its sap
Contains the best of threescore years and ten.

No sanctuary this; no lotus land
With blossoms sweet. Another scent
The fragrant harbour bears.
Its airs defeat their loud lament
And gives voice to their fears:
Retreat or here remain to make a stand.

Accumulated wealth; decay of man;
The evidence is all around:
This is cold comfort farm.
No penitents do here abound;
No charity; no charm.
“Dispense with it” some said “and change our plan.”

But still they stayed, and still more of them came
In constant hope: some few sanguine,
Some cynical, some scared;
The misanthrope and the benign,
Each really ill-prepared
To cope, alas, when menaced tongues declaim:

“You are not wanted here! You have no right
Our aims to thwart. We have our own
Philosophy to fill
An empty heart. Leave us alone
To line our pockets still.
Depart! Desist! This scene offends our sight.”

And whither shall they go when doors are locked
To them and barred? Another land?
Another sea serene
Yet still as hard? Forever banned;
Regarded as obscene;
Ill-starred, kept out, each avenue but blocked.

The days lay heavy on them, and the weeks
Marked mournful time; and endless nights
Of sleepless hours composed
No rest sublime. But lawful rights
And liberties opposed
By crime whose legal putrefaction reeks.

Pity those huddled masses in their hive
Of human pain. What choice had they
Beyond their selfish dream
To hope again? Perhaps to pray,
Or, with a piteous scream,
Complain once more: "We merely want to live!"

Was it not ever so, since the first dawn?
Did not our Lord (perchance, too, theirs)
Enjoy the same disdain?
(The same reward?) For what compares
With crucifix and pain
Of sword and scourge, save that one is reborn.

*** *** *** ***

Winter brought
Another wakening day;
The menace of that dream:
Demoralizing symbol of their fears.

In the Spring
The well-tide of their gay
And sacrificial stream:
The flower must die before the fruit appears.

Hong Kong, December 1979

THE HONG KONG EXPAT TO HIS LOVE

(With apologies to Christopher Marlowe)

Come bide with me, and be my bride,
And we'll roam Hong Kong side by side;
That concrete jungle, asphalt field
May all of its detritus yield.

And we will sit upon Blake Pier
And breathe the noxious atmosphere
Which MTR beneath exhumes,
While diesel taxis spew their fumes.

Where over all great Mammon reigns,
And we must clearly go to pains
To spend and spend ridiculously
On goods consumed conspicuously.

Where judgement passed shall not be budged
By judges who may not be judged;
And wealth and dirt accumulate,
And passers-by expectorate.

Assisted by dear Elsie E,
With lance a-tilt quixotically,
If you would truly understand,
Come dwell with me and take my hand.

And read of police brutality,
Of CAPO and I.C.A.C,
Of boat people and refugees,
And visiting inept M.Ps.

Where buses crash and rentals soar,
And filth piles up upon the shore.
If you would thus corruption prove,
Come live with me, and be my love.

Hong Kong, October 1979

THE SALESMAN SANS LESSEE

[With apologies to Keats]

Oh what can ail thy arms at night
When you've spent all day loitering?
The icing's melted on the cake.
There's a fine thing!

Oh what can ail thy arms at night
Now that another month has gone?
Your Parker fountain pen is full
And no report is done.

I see you really want to know
With wrinkled brow, what there was new
As Sinclair got more adipose
In Hong Kong's zoo.

I met a client in Taipei,
Of horse manure the braggart filled;
His thirst was long, his purse was tight,
Cor, I was wild!

I made a beeline for Bangkok
And Borneo – the Tropic Zone,
They treated me as one bereft
And gave me moan.

I set forth then by SIA
And travelled all day long,
Hoping to find better things
Back in Hong Kong.

But all I got were aching feet
and sinai pains (and earache too –
For sure a language strange they speak
In Hong Kong's zoo).

So then I took me to a spot
Where people meet, in Singapore,
Hoping they could me advise
What I worked for.

And found myself in Bugis Street
Midst drag-dressed beauties – woe betide! –
Who would not lease a single box
Or an open side.

I saw pale Lines and agents too,
Pale clients – death pale were they all.
They cried: The Salesman sans Lessee
Has come to call.

I saw their vast ships in the port
With empty sails all gaped wide,
Then I awoke and found me here
On London side.

And that is why I write so rare
And spend my time a-loitering.
Though the icing's melted on the cake.
There's a fine thing.

On a flight from Singapore to London, March 1981

ODE TO A DYING PUB

[Anent the resolution to rebuild the Hong Kong Club]

The Club, the Club, my local pub,
They mean to tear you down;
Another high monstrosity
Instead will grace this town.
For beauty is regarded as
No substitute for coin.

The Club, the Club, my local pub
Will never be the same,
The voting cast to kill the past
Enjoyed two-thirds acclaim,
For style and grace take second place
In Hongkong's money game.

They each arose and struck a pose
And said: "I love this place,
But when you say that I must pay
For it, that's a disgrace,
And insults my philosophy,
I'd rather lose my face."

For each man kills the thing he loves,
A greater poet said,
So we would choose our past to lose
And gain the cash instead.
Yes, each man kills the thing he loves,
And so my pub is dead.

Hong Kong, December 1979

CONCUPISCENCE

Night interdiction -
the mind won't allow
acceptance.
The spirit yearns for that bodily release.
Rejection!
But frailty of frame,
excess of desire,
force of response
conspire!

We put it from our minds,
but how to put it from our flesh?
Disparage it? Spurn it? Disavow?
What results?
The feeble, grasping, clutching wish –
master to the deed.

And then in retrospect we think:
it's really not too bad,
nor too disgusting,
nor sick.
Rationalisation!
It is all those things
and more besides.

But still we crave it.

London ('fifties)

COMMUNICATION

I've finally considered every option
(And as not one has proved to be ideal,
Including all you've said on post-adoption)
I thought I'd tell you, Michael, how I feel.

Let's spread them as a hand of cards before us,
Awarding each a plus or minus score –
And let's ignore the negative dawn chorus:
“You *can't* do that – it's such a bloody bore!”

For, after all, what is communication?
(An obvious rhetorical request
Which really puts both sides of the equation,
While failing to suggest what is the best.)

So let's suppose we're on some lonely plateau,
Conversing by a campfire in the night.
And, since we're, more or less, in the same bateau,
We'll sink or swim with metaphoric might.

But that, of course, does not apply to Michael -
Or does it? It depends what he prefers.
As well to totter on a uni-cycle,
As try for contact in the form of verse.

Communication is a messy muddle.
No one can really know what we're about.
We might as well just smile and touch and cuddle
Rather than talk, or kick and scream, or shout!

The phone and tom-tom are so unaesthetic;
The internet and e-mail are a bore.
Mind-reading is simply tele-pathetic
It's something that we safely can ignore.

Communication, then, is an illusion,
A dream, a joke, the sustenance of fools.
But true to form, we can effect a fusion
By application of NLP tools.

So body language goes as does mind reading
It's obvious I must *adopt* the *post*!
And turn my back on entry cues and leading
And let the Royal Mail become the host.

Email to Michael Mallows, Dorset 2003

THE SONG OF HIAWALPOLE

(A TRIBUTE TO A CHAIRPERSON - NOT SO MUCH RETIRING AS RETIRED)

(With due acknowledgement to Longfellow)

[Written as a tribute to Audrey Walpole on her retirement as Chairperson of the Barnet Thirty-Plus Social Group and performed with musical accompaniment on July 17, 1985]

Should you ask me, whence these members?
Whence these spinsters and divorcees,
With their stories of betrayals,
With their sorrows and their hang-ups,
Whence these newly separated,
With the fret and fume of break-ups,
And the bachelor contingent,
With their deep-laid egocentrics,
As of whistling in the kitchens?

I should answer, I should tell you,
“From the cities and the suburbs,
From the bounds of the Great North Ways,
From the land of the New Southgates,
From the land of the Cockfosters,
From the commons, ponds and parkways,
Where the hero, the Bob-Kurschner,
Feeds among the pubs and taverns,
I repeat them as I heard them
From the lips of Jay-the-Linden,
The musician, the sweet singer.”

Should you ask where Jay-the-Linden
Found these songs, so wild and wayward,
Found these legends and traditions,
I should answer, I should tell you,
“In the midst of Epping Forest,
In the mumblings of the rambler,
In the hoof-prints of the Houghton,
In the eyrie of the Eckett!

“All the sad-folk sang them to him,
In the Meadways and the Burroughs,
From the melancholy Marcias;
Don-the-Bake, the consort, sang them,
Pete-the-Loon, the wild-Gwen, Wawa,
The blue hero, Bob-the-Kurschner,
And the grouse, the John-the-Rayner!”

If still further you should ask me,
Saying, “Who was Jay-the-Linden?
Tell us of this Jay-the-Linden.”
I should answer your enquiries
Straightway in such words as follows.

“In the vale of Barnet’s centre,
In the green and silent valley,
By the pleasant picnic-parties,
Dwelt the singer Jay-the-Linden.
Round about the Barnet village
Spread the members and prospectives,
And beyond them stood the forest,
Stood the hordes of singing outcasts,
Brown in Summer, blue in Winter,
Ever sighing, ever singing.

“And the pleasant meeting places,
You could trace them through the borough,
By the Red Lion in the Spring-time,
By the Green Man in the Summer,
By the White Horse in the Autumn,
By the Black Bull in the Winter;
And beside them dwelt the singer,
In the vale of Barnet’s centre,
In the green and silent borough.

“There he sang of Hiawalpole,
Sang the song of Hiawalpole,
Sang her wondrous birth and being,
How she chaired and how she voted,
How she ruled, and toiled, and harried,
That the Thirty-plus might prosper,
That she might advance her members!”

Ye who love the haunts of Barnet,
Love the sunshine of the Southgate,
Love the shadow of the Whetstone,
Love the wind among the Ponders,
And the Potters and the Bushey,
And the rushing of great traffic
Through the palisades of zebras,
And the thunder in High Loughton,
Whose innumerable echoes
Flap like Ecketts in their eyries; -
Listen to these wild traditions,
To this Song of Hiawalpole!

Ye who love a "single's" legends,
Love the ballads of a circle,
That like voices from afar off
Call to us to pause and listen,
Speak in tones so plain and childlike,
Scarcely can the ear distinguish
Whether they are sung or spoken; -
Listen to this Barnet Legend,
To this Song of Hiawalpole.

Ye who sometimes in your rambles
Through the Green-slades of the county,
Where the tangled barberry-wardles
Hang their tufts of crimson Beryls
Over stone walls grey with Husseys,
Pause by some neglected tavern,
For a while to muse, and ponder
On a half-effaced graffito,
Written with little skill of song-craft,
Homely phrases, but each letter
Full of hope and yet of heart-break,
Full of all the tender pathos
Of the insecure, and weirdness; -
Stay and read this rude graffiti,
Read this Song of Hiawalpole.

I. THE PEACE PIPE

On the Moat Mount of the Arkley,
On the Mill Hill Stoney Quarry,
Wendy Sturgess, she the Founder,
She the Thirty-Plus envisioned;
Midst the local small ad columns
Placed an ad and called a meeting,
Called the Barnet tribes together.

* * * * *

And they met there on the Meadow,
With their hang-ups and obsessions,
Painted like the leave of Autumn,
Painted like the sky of morning,
Wildly glaring at each other;
In their faces stern defiance,
In their hearts the feuds of ages,
The hereditary sex-war,
Spited spouseful thirst of vengeance.

Wendy Sturgess, she the Founder,
The creator of the circle,
Looked upon them with compassion,
With maternal love and pity;
Looked upon their fears and tremors
But as worries among children,
But as doubts and frights of children!

“Oh my children! My poor Children!
Listen to the words of wisdom,
Listen to the words of warning
From the lips of the Great Founder,
From the Creator who made you!

“I will send a Prophet to you,
A Chairperson of the Singles,
Who shall guide you and shall teach you,
Who shall toil and suffer with you.
If you listen to his counsels
You will multiply and prosper;
If his warnings pass unheeded,
You will fade away and perish!”

II. THE FOUR WINDS

“Honour be to Merville Potter!”
Cried the members, cried the first ones,
When he was in triumph chosen
By the sacred twelve of Barnet,
From the regions of the North-West,
From the kingdom of the Herts-Lands,
From the land of the Two Brewers.

“Honour be to Merville Potter!”
With a shout exclaimed the members.
“Honour be to Merville Potter!
Henceforth shall he be the Chairman,
And hereafter and for ever
Shall he hold supreme dominion
Over every kind of member.
Call him no more Merville Potter,
Call him Chairman, El Supremo!”

Thus was Merville Potter chosen
Chairman of the Club Committee,
He himself the El-Suspremo
Gave some honours to his children;
Unto Jean he gave the kitchen,
Gave the purse to Peter Clinton,
And the minutes, so demanding,
To the pleasant Beryl Summons.

Thus the places were divided;
Thus the children of the Chairman
Had their stations in the Circle,
At the centre of the Circle,
For himself, as El Supremo,
Stayed the mighty Merville Potter.

III HIAWALPOLE'S CHILDREN

Downward through the Barnet twilight,
In the days that are forgotten,
In the unremembered Minutes,
From the highest fell the Stovell,
Fell the loyal Joy-the-Stovell,
She the one above all others.

Thus was born the Hiawalpole,
Thus was born the new Supremo;
But the loyal Joy-the-Stovell,
Hiawalpole's gentle sponsor,
In her turn expired, deserted
By the former El Supremo,
By the mighty Merville Potter.

By the shores of South Herts Golf Course,
By the shining Stray-of-Whetsone,
Stood the wigwam of the Stovell,
The Supremo, Joy-the-Stovell.
Dark behind it rose the High Street,
Rose the black and gloomy Woodside,
Rose the Tally-Ho of corners,
Bright before it beat South Finchley,
Beat the clear and sunny Glebe Land,
Beat the shining Stray-of-Whetstone.

There the retired Joy-the-Stovell
Nursed the little Hiawalpole,
Rocked her in the Linden Gardens,
Bedded soft in picnic-parties,
Safely bound with wines and cheeses.

Many things the Stovell taught her
Of the form of Constitution;
Showed how major Club proposals
Had to be supplied in writing;
Showed how booking-in for functions
Had to have sufficient notice,
How, if members had to cancel,
Promptness showed consideration.

In the club on summer evenings
Joined the little Hiawalpole,
Joined the eat-outs and the dances,
Heart the slap-slap-cock of shuttle,
Sounds of music, words of wonder;
Of all functions learned the language,
Learned their names and all their secrets,
How to price the social evenings,
Where to hold the monthly dances,
How to play the card and board games,
Why some members were so timid,
Talked with them whene'er she met them:
Called them "Hiawalpole's Children".

Then the Pillock, the great boaster,
He the marvellous story-teller,
He the traveller and the talker,
He the friend of Joy-the-Stovell,
Made a diary for the Circle;
From a Christmas gift he made it,
Will a ball-point made the entries,
Touched with tongue and pressed with blotter,
Which he gave to Hiawalpole.

[IV - V]

VI HIAWALPOLE'S FRIENDS

Most beloved by Hiawalpole,
Singled out from all the others,
Bound to her in closest union,
And to whom she gave the right hand
Of her heart, in joy and sorrow,
Was the gentle Don-the Baker.

Straight between them ran the pathway,
Never grew the grass upon it;
Singing-birds, that utter falsehoods,
Story-tellers, mischief-makers,
Found no eager ear to listen,
Could not breed ill-will between them,

For they kept each other's counsel,
Spake with naked hearts together,
Pondering much, and much contriving
How the Barnet tribes might prosper.

Then the singer, Jay-the-Linden,
Jay-the-Linden, the musician,
He the best of all musicians,
When he sang the members listened;
All the members read his programmes,
All the menfolk gathered round him,
All the women came to hear him;
Now he stirred their souls to passion,
Now he melted them to pity.

From the diary notes he fashioned
Paragraphs so sweet and mellow,
That Jill Dilks and Vera Fisher,
Ceased to murmur in the Wood Street,
That the Woodhams ceased from singing,
And the Sybil, she the Ashton,
Ceased her chatter in the Oakwood,
And the Roberts and the Lemos
Sat upright to look and listen.

Yes, the cook, the Smith of Southgate,
Pausing, said, "O Jay-the-Linden,
Teach my quiches to melt the tastebuds,
Softly as your words the programme!"

Yes the jay-bird, he the Aubrey,
Envious, said, "O Jay-the-Linden,
Teach me words as wild and wayward,
Teach me jokes as full of frenzy!"

All the many social evenings
Borrowed lustre from his writing;
All the members' hearts were softened
By the weirdness of his humour;
For he wrote of treasure-hunting,

Wrote of sports days, films and dancing;
Wrote his “bitsas” and gave mention
To the former event-givers,
In the kingdom of the Kurschner,
In the land of Pete-the-Pillock.

Very dear to Hiawalpole
Was the singer Jay-the-Linden,
Dear, too, unto Hiawalpole
Was the strong man, Don-the-Baker,
He the strongest of all mortals,
He the mightiest among many;
For his very strength she loved him,
For his strength allied to goodness.

* * * * *

VII HIAWALPOLE’S SAILING

“Give me of your trust, O Barnet!
Of your full support, O Barnet!
Rambles by the Lea Green River,
Lakeside concerts in the valley!
I a singles group will build me,
Build a sturdy club for sailing,
That shall float upon the current,
Like a Bargery in Autumn,
Like a Stephen Winter Woolley!

“Lay aside your punch, O Barnet!
Lay aside your hot fork suppers,
For the Summer-time is coming,
And the sun is warm in Hendon,
And you need no hot fork suppers!”

Thus aloud cried Hiawalpole
In the ears of Gwen-the-Forrest,
By the rushing Pauline Fletcher,
With the spinsters singing gaily,
All the widowers were singing,
And Gibson, from sleep awaking,
Started up and said, "Behold me!
Jesus!" said Gibson, "Behold me!"

And the Group, with all its members,
Rustled and gave up its mourning,
Giving (for a small donation),
"These events, O Hiawalpole!"

"Give me of your pubs, O Kurschner!
Of your great and flowing taverns,
My club members now to succour,
Make more pliable to heed me."

Through the mouth of Bob-the-Kurschner
Came a sound, a cry of horror,
Came a murmur of resistance,
But it whispered, breathing bitter,
"Take my pubs, O Hiawalpole!"

"Give me pork to carve, O Findlay!
Of the Orange Tree, O Brenner!
My own group to bind together,
So that we may feed together,
That the Vegan may not enter,
That the Beth Din may not get me!"

And the Brenner and the Findlay
Put aside their air of mourning,
Tugged at forelock, pulled at tassels,
Said together, "Come tomorrow,
Eat-outs, yours, O Hiawalpole!"

"Give me of your tapes, O Freestone!
Of your Beatles and your Abba,
So that we may dance together,

That the loneliness not enter,
That the hard rock sound may get me!"

And the Freestone, tall and sombre,
Sobbed through all its ancient cassettes,
Rattled like an Art Garfunkle,
Answered rocking, answered rolling,
"Take the lot, O Hiawalpole!"

"Give me of your plants, O Evans!
All your plants, O Pat-the-Evans!
I will make a swop-shop of them,
Take some cuttings for my members,
And some roots to deck their gardens!"

From East Barnet, Pat-the-Evans
'neath her floppy hat looked at her,
Shot her rose-bush barbs, like arrows,
Saying, with an earthy rumble,
Through the tangle of her shrubland,
"Take my plants, O Hiawalpole!"

Thus the Barnet-group was builded
By the Shepherd, by the Tinkler,
In the bosom of Gwen Forrest;
And the borough's life was in it,
All its sports days and its tennis,
All the lightness of the Clifford,
All the toughness of the Williams,
All the Greenslade's supple sinews;
And it floated on the current
Like a Bargery in Autumn,
Like a Winter Stephen Woolley.

And thus sailed the Hiawalpole,
Down the rushing road of Edgware,
Sailed through Hendon Way and Fryent,
Sailed through Colindeep and Harrow,
While her friend, strong Don-the-Baker,
Made the teas, and bread he buttered.

XIV PICTURE WRITING

In those days, said Hiawalpole,
“Lo! how all things fade and perish!
From the memory of the members,
Fade away the great occasions,
The achievements of the sportsmen,
The adventures of the walkers,
All the wisdom of the Scrabblers,
All the craft of solo players,
All the marvellous Lakeside concerts
Of the Findlays, Primes and Perrys!

“Great times pass and are forgotten,
Goldman speaks; his words of wisdom
Perish in the ears of Chapman,
Do not reach the Barnet stations
Where the Philistines are waiting,
Or the fastness of East Finchley,
(Mensa corpore non sano . . .).

In the programmes of our Founders
Are no hints, no details given,
Who attended them we know not,
Only know they were our Founders.
From what streets they came, and districts,
In what old ancestral tavern,
Be it beaver, Bell or Badger,
They did tipple, this we know not;
Only know they were our Founders.

One day Hiawalpole walking
On the hills of Hadley Common,
Pondering, musing on the common,
On the welfare of her members.

From her bag she took her colours,
Felt-tipped pens of different colours.
On the smooth walls of a toilet
Painted many pithy figures,
Like unto the Cistern Chapel.

Flushed with pride she viewed the figures,
Each depicting event-givers.

Eddie Bargery, the Mighty,
He the Dance-at-Hatfield giver,
With his belly thus projecting
To the four winds of theborough.
Everywhere the great beer spirit
Was the meaning of this symbol.

Franklin, Monica-the-Mighty,
She the outside-events maker,
At the Serpentine depicted,
With the Davis, she the Swimmer,
Very breasty, very crawly,
And the spirit of the freestyle
Was the meaning of this symbol.

Max-and-Norma drawn as counters
On a scrabble-board were painted,
Max white-haired and Norma darker;
Triple-worded, double-lettered,
The most faithful event-givers.

For eat-outs she drew a meat pie,
With a little mustard on it;
Smiling faces for the parties
And the Stella Lemos dances;
And for rain and cloudy weather,
Ron Higgs with his card games evenings.

Footprints pointing towards a wigwam
Were a sign of invitation
To the Avenue of Princes;
Bloody hands with bats uplifted
Were a sign of table tennis:
Ping-pong players soft and simple.

XXI THE WHITE MAN'S FOOT

From his wanderings to the East End,
From the regions east of Wapping,
From the Essex land of Ilford,
Westward now returned the Pillock,
The great traveller, the great boaster,
Full of new prospective members,
Trustful all, the many females.

And the members of the circle
Listened to him as he told them
Of his marvellous adventures,
Full of awe, declaimed in this wise:
"Gosh! It is indeed the Pillock!
No one else attracts such females!"

He had seen, he said, a tavern
Bigger than the Railway Tavern,
Gayer than the Jolly Brewers,
Bitter such as none had tasted!
At each other looked the members,
Looked the drinkers at each other,
Smiled, and said, "It cannot be so!
Garn!" they said, "It cannot be so!"

Also, said he, in a snack bar
Was a great machine with pistons,
A machine with liquid steaming,
Hotter than the hottest tea urn,
Stronger than the strongest coffee!
And the tea and coffee drinkers
Looked and tittered at each other.
"Coo!" they said, "we don't believe it!"

From its spout, he said, to warm one
Came a dark brown steaming liquid
Which the natives called espresso,
Stronger than the best Nescafe,
Tastier than Brooke Bond's tea bags.
"Cor!" they said, "what tales you tell us!
Do not think that we believe them!"

Only Hiawalpole laughed not,
But she gravely spoke and answered
To their doubting and their jeering,
“True is all the Pillock tells us;
I had had it in a snack bar
From the great machine with pistons,
Seen it warm the palest faces
From the regions east of Wapping,
And the far off land of Kilburn.

“Let us welcome, then, these strangers,
These prospective eastern members,
Hold out Barnet’s hand of friendship
To them when they come to see us,
For they may have much to teach us,
And we need some new blood in us,
Now before the old ones leave us
Like the withered leaves of Autumn!”

XXII HIAWALPOLE’S DEPARTURE

Heavy with the weight of office
Grew the heart of Hiawalpole,
As the joyful-sounding members
Frolicked round her Kingsbury wigwam;
Though she tried hard to disguise it
At her monthly social evenings.

From the kitchen, shrill and ceaseless,
Spake the candidate, Penn-Sayers,
While the guests of Hiawalpole,
Weary of electioneering,
Frolicked in the Kingsbury wigwam.

From her place rose Hiawalpole,
Went to speak to B. Penn-Sayers,
Spake in whispers, spake in this wise,
Not to worry guests that frolicked.

“I am going, O Penn-Sayers,
On a long and distant journey,
Far beyond the bounds of Barnet,
But these guests I leave behind me,
In your watch and ward I leave them;
See they have their share of dances,
See that boredom never face them,
Never blank dates on the programme,
Never want for picnic parties,
In the Barnet Singles’ Circle!”

Back into the parlour went she,
Bade farewell to all the spinsters,
Bade farewell to all the old men,
Spake persuading, spake in this wise:

“I am going, O my Members,
On a long and distant journey;
Many walks and many sports days
Will have come and will have vanished
Ere I may again hold office.
But you have a new committee;
Listen to their words of wisdom,
Read the programmes that they give you
When the G.P.O. has brought them
From the last collating evening.”

At the door stood Hiawalpole,
Waved her hand at guests departing.
In the Avenue of Princes,
Derek Snell despatched his Volvo
From the edges of the kerbside,
Shoved it into fourth and top gear;
Whispered to it: “Homeward, homeward!”
And with speed it darted forward.

And the party guests departing,
Set the road on fire with rear lights,
Turned the avenue to crimson,

As they left the Leader's wigwam,
Left her to her dreams of splendour
As a foremost party-giver,
Left their noble Hiawalpole,
Drove into the depths of Barnet,
Drove into the Stray of Whetstone,
Drove into the Mount of Arkley.

And the Thirty-plus of Barnet
Had their voting evening meeting,
And the new committee chosen
Lifted high the Salisbury splendour,
Till it sank into the beer fumes.
And the old ones, more than holy,
Took the line of least resistance.

And they said, "Farewell to Edna!"
Said, "Farewell, O Hiawalpole!"
And Gwen Forrest took the programme
And prepared her countless footnotes,
Sighing, "Farewell, Jay-the-Linden!"
And with notes upon the margin,
Jean-the-Taylor took up office,
Sobbing, "Farewell, Don-the-Baker!"
While the hero, Bob-the-Kurschner,
From his perch among the beer-mugs,
Screeched: "I'll still control the members!"

Then Penn-Sayers-B the prophet,
Paid her tribute to the Leader,
Saying that, "With her permission
We may find some virgin members."
And the Allison, the dealer
In the new enquiry section,
Took the mantle of the Gibson,
Took up, too, relations public.

And the members answered, saying:
"We have listened to your statements,
We have heard your words of wisdom,

Now let's drink another bitter,
It is well for us, O Brothers,
That we haven't far to get it!"

Then they rose up and departed,
Each one homeward to his wigwam,
Musing, all the men and women,
On the strange new club committee
Which they had, in wisdom, voted
To protect the tribes of Barnet.

Thus departed Hiawalpole,
Hiawalpole the Beloved,
In the glory of the Salisbury,
In the High Street of Old Barnet,
To the Avenue of Princes.
And the regions of the North-West,
And the lands of the Two Brewers,
And the kingdom of the Herts-Lands,
Vowed to honour her hereafter!

Spot On

Spot On

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Dr Spot is a favourite invention of mine, although I do recognise that he is rather crackbrained, and the series is somewhat ingenuous.

The series as published originally in *New Learning* was, however, intended to point up some simple therapeutic verities in a form that made them readily accessible to the novice, and probably gave me more pleasure in writing than subscribers got from reading.

Making him a Professor of Urinology was intended to be a scatological reference to his identity as a piss-artist.

MAKING IT WITH DOCTOR SPOT



[From the casebook of Doctor Spot, Emeritus Professor of Urinology, University of Yonkers]

[Case #106. Noah Cheever. Transcript of tape recording, Tuesday 11 June, 19—]

DS: Okay, Noah, what are you going to do for yourself?

NC (*puzzled*): I thought I was here so that *you* could do something for me.

DS: The best thing I can do for you, Noah, is to show you how you can do things for yourself. Indeed, you are the only one who can do things for yourself.

NC: I don't understand.

DS: When you first came to see me you identified your concern: you said you never manage to get things done, although you always have lots of ideas. Right?

NC: Right.

DS: Your difficulty comes, then, in putting your ideas into practice. Right?

NC: Right.

DS: Who can put your ideas into practice if not you, yourself?

NC: But that is precisely my problem, Doctor.

DS: No, Noah, that is your opportunity! Your problem is actually to identify precisely what you want to achieve, and then to employ the right formula in order to achieve it. This is known as formulating an outcome - actually a *well-formed outcome*.

NC: What do you mean by a *well-formed* outcome? How does this differ from any common or garden variety of outcome?

DS: A well-formed outcome has to satisfy certain criteria. It has to be positive, not negative. What do I want, rather than what do I not want? It has to be specific and reasonably achievable. It must not be too large. If it is too large, you must break it down into smaller chunks and achieve them a bit at a time. Finally it should be ecologically sound, with a proper regard for the environment, for your relationship with other creatures, other people, and with yourself.

NC: How do I do all that, then, Doctor Spot?

DS: Well, Noah, I want you to go away and produce the answers to the following questions. Write them down carefully now in your notebook. One: *What do I want?* And, when you consider the answer make sure you express it in absolutely positive terms, i.e. what you want; not just the opposite of what you don't want. Two: *How will I know when I have got it?* Three: *What will I be doing, seeing, feeling, thinking and hearing when I have done it?* Four: *How will I reinforce my positive intentions?* For instance, cast your mind back to an occasion (no matter how long ago) when you actually achieved something. Then try to recall how you felt, thought at the time. Also what visual or auditory associations you may have around that incident. And try to keep all that in your mind when you are producing your well-formed outcome. Finally: *How will I try to sabotage myself?*

Right! I'm putting you in my diary for next Tuesday at 10.30am, and I expect you to have all the answers for me then.

[Case #106. Noah Cheever. Transcript of tape recording, Tuesday 18 June, 19 —]

DS: Good morning, Noah. You're looking very pleased with yourself today.

NC: Indeed I am, Doctor. I actually completed the exercise you set me last week. And it has made all the difference.

DS: Good, good! Let me hear your answers. First: what do you want?

NC: I want a new career.

DS: Next: How will you know when you have got it?

NC: I will be enjoying a remarkable sense of achievement, of fulfilment.

DS: What will you be doing, seeing, feeling, thinking and hearing?

NC: I will be sitting behind a desk, like you. I will see a lily-livered, weak-willed individual (like I was) lying on a couch. I will be feeling powerful. I will be thinking: this is the life! I will be hearing myself saying: give yourself a well-formed outcome!

DS: How will you reinforce your positive intentions?

NC: I will recall how marvellous this moment is, and will see, hear and feel all the associated sights, sounds and feelings I have at present.

DS: Finally, Noah, how will you try to sabotage yourself?

NC: By my patterned response to the imagined suffering of others. By introjecting the frustrations and inconveniences of other people, which I imagine to be caused by my selfishness. This, I now realise, is what stopped me from being an achiever before. I always imagined that I could only achieve something for myself at the expense of taking something from others. Now I realise that I cannot live other people's lives for them. I can only do things for myself, not for others. They have to do things for themselves. They have to take responsibility for their own ecological considerations. I have you to thank for opening my eyes to that, Doctor Spot.

DS: And . . . therefore . . . your outcome . . .

NC: I thought you would have realised. Why! I'm going to set up in practice as a psychotherapist, and show others how to produce well-formed outcomes in order to cure themselves. Sorry, Doctor, but this is the last session you will have with me.

DS: [thinks] *At this rate I'm going to end up without any clients at all. I'd better start formulating a few well-formed outcomes of my own.*

NO EXPECTATIONS WITH DOCTOR SPOT



[From the casebook of Doctor Spot, Emeritus Professor of Urinology, University of Yonkers]

[Case #006. Hope Springs. Transcript of tape recording, Tuesday 11 June, 19—]

HS: Doctor Spot, this is my third session and I don't feel I'm getting anywhere.

DS: Where would you like to get, Hope?

HS: What do you mean?

DS: I mean: if you feel you're getting nowhere, there must be a somewhere you'd like to get. Where is that somewhere?

HS: I don't know. I just know that I come here every time full of expectations and I leave here full of disappointment.

DS: Ah, but you see, Hope, that is the inevitable result of having expectations.

HS: But everyone has to have expectations, doctor. If I didn't have expectations, how would I know what I really want. And if my expectations are not met, then of course I'm going to be disappointed.

DS: But then, you could also have negative expectations. Would you be disappointed if your negative expectations were not fulfilled? Or would you be overjoyed?

HS: I think I would still be disappointed. Because I would have geared myself up to face something which didn't happen.

DS: Exactly!

HS: So what are you telling me to do?

DS: I'm not telling you to do anything, Hope, I am suggesting that you might consider other ways in which you anticipate future events. Anticipation rather than expectation! Better still: don't expect, just experience.

HS: You must explain that, Dr Spot.

DS: It means, simply, that if the end result of expectation is disappointment, and you wish to avoid disappointment, then stop expecting. Just let it happen. Go with the flow.

HS: So you mean it's like *che sarà sarà*?

DS: No, Hope, that is an expression of fatalism. Or like Dr Pangloss's "All is for the best in this best of all possible worlds". The suggestion being that we are incapable of affecting our own destiny. I am suggesting, on the contrary, anticipation without expectation. Contingency planning without a fatalistic dependency on the outcome. Instead of expecting, try experiencing. Where, previously, you might have said: "This isn't what I expected to happen. How disappointing!" Now you can say: "This is an experience! I am enjoying an experience! I have a whole range of choices open to me for dealing with this experience. What an adventure!!"

[Case #006. Hope Springs. Transcript of telephone call, Tuesday 18 June, 19 —]

DS: Hello.

HS: Doctor Spot?

DS: Yes. Who is this?

HS: Hope Springs here, doctor. Just to tell you that I can't make today's session.

DS: But Hope, you were supposed to be here fifteen minutes ago. Couldn't you have let me know sooner?

HS: You mean you were expecting me to let you know in good time?

DS: Of course.

HS: Well, doctor, you see how expectations lead to disappointment. Try experiencing. . .

DS: I think you fail to understand exactly what I meant when I told you that.

HS: Oh, I don't think so, Dr Spot. I've given it a lot of thought, and you were quite right. I see now how I can help others the way you helped me. And, by the way, please don't expect me to settle your bill. I may do so, and then again I may not. Anticipate without expecting - and be prepared to enjoy the experience.



PROBLEM SOLVING WITH DOCTOR SPOT



[From the casebook of Doctor Spot, Emeritus Professor of Urinology, University of Yonkers]

[Case #352. Olga Volt. Transcript of tape recording, Friday 9 March, 19—]

OV: Tell me, Doctor, why do I always find it so hard to solve my problems? Why do I get this feeling that every attempt to solve a problem only seems to make it worse?

DS: Oh my, Olga, what a condundrum! Tell me, have you got any solutions?

OV: How can I have solutions when I can't solve my problems?

DS: Ahah! Ahah! There you have the crux of the problem. But you also have the solution. Stop thinking about your problem. You think about it so much that you are blind to the possible solution. You see nothing but the situation which is causing the problem. Put the situation behind you. Think about something else. Better still, think about solutions. Any solutions. Make a list. Get a notebook. Then, when you have a problem, look at your solutions and fit one to your problem.

OV: Is that the best advice you can give me?

DS: Listen, for the fee you pay me, you expect good advice? You want good advice, go see a psychotherapist. Go see a lawyer. Better yet, go see that smart-aleck brother-in-law of yours - the one who charges the earth to take wrinkles from one place and put them in another. With *chutzpah* like that he must have all the answers.

OV: Okay, okay, already. But give me a clue at least.

DS: You want a clue? Listen to Hippocrates: "It is more important to know what sort of a person has a disease than to know what sort of disease a person has." Thank you. That will be forty dollars, and I'll see you next week. And bring your notebook with you; the notebook with the solution.

*[Case #352. Olga Volt. Extract from letter dated Thursday March 18, 19 —
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Dear Doctor Spot,

Enclosed please find cheque for ten dollars. I figure that if I'm not actually visiting you, I'm entitled to a discount.

Herewith a page from my notebook. Please let me know what you think about my solutions. If there's anything wrong with this system, or the money isn't enough - well, that's your problem, and my advice is to remember the words of the hypocrites.

Yours in good health. . .

[Case #352. The solutions of Olga Volt.]

- 1. Ignore my problem. Tell myself there is no such thing as a problem.**
- 2. Think about the way I see my problem. Keep an open mind about it. Accept that it is going to continue frustrating me, but maybe I can find a new perspective on it.**
- 3. Consider what sort of messages my problem is giving me. Perhaps the problem is not really a problem at all, but a channel for discovering some part of my life that needs investigation, or change, or reframing.**
- 4. Accept my problem. Learn to live with it. Get on with my life. Pay the price for living with it and save forty dollars a week.**

RISK TAKING WITH DOCTOR SPOT



[From the casebook of Doctor Spot, Emeritus Professor of Urinology, University of Yonkers]

[Case #243. Petra Phide. Transcript of tape recording, Monday 8 September, 19—]

PP: *[deep sigh]*

DS: So, Petra, tell me how you're feeling.

PP: Awful, Doctor. I just don't know how to tell you.

DS: Aah, Petra, you must learn how to communicate your feelings to others. You must allow them to communicate their feelings to you.

PP: But I get so scared.

DS: Exactly. Taking risks is a scary business. But unless you allow yourself to be felt, and let yourself feel others, you will continue to be anxious. You must learn to relax. Anxiety cannot survive where relaxation exists.

PP: So how do I start?

DS: You start by taking a chance, Petra. In fact you can take a lot of chances. In fact you could take nothing but chances.

PP: Doctor, doctor, I'm forty years old. How can I start taking chances now?

DS: It has been said that some people do not have forty years of experience; they have one year of experience forty times. So, imagine you are one year old . . . Who's going to blame a one-year old for taking a chance?

PP: But I can't do it, I can't do it.

DS: Telling yourself you can't do it is the same thing as being unable to do it. Give yourself the choice. Tell yourself you could do it if you wanted to do it.

Someone else once said: fear is the gaoler. If you are afraid, you will always choose the most negative option available to you.

PP: I don't understand, what are you telling me to do?

DS: Listen . . . When you leave here I want you to start thinking about your fear. Realise that fear often comes from guilt feelings. Try and recall some occasions when you felt guilty and afraid. Face up to the guilt and the fear. You may find it is a far less uncomfortable experience than you imagine.

PP: Okay. And then . . . ?

DS: Then, imagine a situation when your guilt or your fear immobilized you from doing what you really would like to do. And take the risk!

[Case #243. Petra Phide. Transcript of tape recording, Monday 15 September, 19 —]

DS: So, Petra, how are you feeling today?

PP: Fine, doctor, fine. In fact, never better.

DS: And did you take any chances last week?

PP: Well, to tell you the truth, doctor, I decided . . .

DS: Petra, Petra, what are you doing?

PP: I'm taking the risk.

DS: But Petra, you're not supposed to do that . . .

PP: I'm letting you know how I feel. I want to feel how you feel. . .

DS: But Petra, you're supposed to be the one on the couch, not me.

PP: I've wanted to do this for more than one year. You finally opened me up to myself. You taught me to take chances. I'm so grateful. You feel. . . you feel . . .

DS: Petra, Petra, you mustn't.

PP: Now, Doctor Spot, take the risk. Take a chance or two. Imagine you're one year old.

DS: Petra, no, no . . . aaarrgh . . . aaarrgh . . .

PP: It feels . . . it feels . . .

DS: Aaaaaahhhhh . . .

[The rest of the tape is indecipherable]



TAKING RESPONSIBILITY WITH DOCTOR SPOT



[From the casebook of Dr. Spot, Emeritus Professor of Urinology, University of Yonkers]

[Case #38. May Akulpa. Transcript of tape recording, Tuesday 15 March, 19—]

MA: I hope you can help me, Doctor Spot.

DS: I hope you can help yourself, May.

MA: I don't understand. If I could stop myself feeling guilty I wouldn't need to come here.

DS: But you can, May, you can. In fact you are the only one who can! I can suggest the tools, but you are the one who must use them.

MA: What are these tools?

DS: The first tool, the main tool, is *CHOICE*. In fact this need be the only tool because, at the end of the day, all the resources I suggest can be boiled down to the issue of choice. You are what you choose to be. You will become what you choose to become. Your's is the unique responsibility.

MA: But how will that stop me feeling guilty?

DS: Your guilt feelings come about because you fail to take responsibility. Since others are perceived as being responsible for your problems, you think there must be something wrong with you. There is nothing wrong with you, just as there is nothing wrong with them. They are OK and you are OK. They just have different maps from you. Do you understand?

MA: No. But I suppose that's OK. Okay?

DS: Hmmmm . . . Look, May, it is easier to blame others than to take responsibility for yourself. On the other hand there is no need to blame yourself or see yourself as guilty when you take responsibility for your actions, your perceived problems, or yourself.

MA: Why do you think I do that?

DS: You see, May, we believe that guilt requires punishment and sometimes we spend a lifetime punishing ourselves for something long past which no longer has any relevance - if, indeed, it ever had. Past events continue to cause pain in the present - even when those events have been resolved.

MA: So what must I do?

DS: Well there is a Zen saying: "Unless we change our direction we are likely to end up where we are headed". Accepting responsibility for the past is a way of taking control over the future.

MA: So what is the answer?

DS: I am not here to offer you answers. As I have already said, I am here to offer you tools whereby you will find your own answers. I will merely suggest that taking responsibility means rejecting the notion of guilt as well as ridding yourself of anxiety. Remember, guilt is merely to anchor yourself in the past; anxiety is to anchor yourself in the future. You must learn to live in the present. Now is the only moment there is.

MA: I think I understand.

DS: Good. Think about it before our next session. And if you find yourself about to access any feeling of guilt, just recall this session and put yourself back into the present where you can take full responsibility.

[Case #38. May Akulpa. Transcript of message on answerphone: Thursday 17 March, 19—]

Hello, Doctor Spot, this is May Akulpa. I'm calling from the West London police station. Could you please call back as soon as possible. The police have taken me into custody for questioning about some crime. They asked me some questions and I refused to answer. I told them I was following your instructions and taking responsibility for the present and that you told me I was not to concern myself with any past events. But they don't believe me. Could you please call and confirm this to them. Please. Quickly, please, as I left a casserole in the oven.

THINKING YOURSELF BETTER WITH DOCTOR SPOT



[From the casebook of Doctor Spot, Emeritus Professor of Urinology, University of Yankers]

[Case #73. Ivor Payne. Transcript of tape recording, Friday 2 November, 19—]

DS: You realise of course Ivor, that it's all in the mind?

IP (*belligerently*): If it's all in the mind, why does it hurt in my arse?

DS: Ivor. You are describing the symptom. I am defining the dilemma.

IP: I don't understand.

DS: Okay. Let me explain. When you first came to see me you said you had been to see your GP, right?

IP: Right.

DS: And your GP could find nothing wrong with you. True?

IP: True.

DS: And he recommended a specialist who gave you a thorough examination. And he also found nothing wrong with you, no?

IP: No. I mean, yes. I mean, no.

DS: You see, Ivor? You see? You do not have a pain in the arse. You only think you have a pain in the arse. Your pain is in your mind. You are locating it in your arse to give yourself a message.

IP: What do you mean, a message? What message?

DS: The message that you *are* a pain in the arse. A pain in the arse to yourself. And if you don't start taking my advice, you'll become a pain in the arse to me!

IP: What's your advice then, Dr. Spot?

DS: First of all: pay my bills! If a thing don't cost, it's not valued. If it's not valued, it's worthless. So who's going to take worthless advice?

IP: Oy!

DS: What is it now?

IP: My arse is suddenly hurting again! Quick! Give me some more advice.

DS: Right. When you leave here I want you to do some things. I want you to write some things down. And while you've got your pen out, first write a cheque
-

IP: Enough. Enough already with the cheque.

DS: So listen up. And stop grimacing. You write down the answers to the following. One: when did you first notice the pain? Two: has it always been of the same intensity? Three: can you associate any fluctuations in intensity with any particular incident or time? Next: do you suffer from bouts of gloom and depression? Next (what number is that? Never mind!): does the pain come, and is it worse or better, when you are feeling depressed, or when you are feeling cheerful?

IP: But I can answer all those question now . . .

DS: Forget it. Just think about them at home, and write the answers down. I want you to *really* think about them. Imagine you're a member of a club. The other members are all those other people you surely know, who are always complaining to you about their pains. You all have pains somewhere. Imagine yourself describing your pain to the other members. And imagine what they might be saying to you about their pains.

IP: And then . . .?

DS: And then, think about what advice you would give the others, and try it on for size yourself. Ask yourself: is my pain actually good for me? Is it my best choice at the present time? Is it helping me to avoid something? Or is it trying to teach me something? What benefits would I gain if I lost my pain; and what other problems might I have if I lost it?

IP: And then . . .?

DS: Then come back again next week. Same time. And let me know what you have learned about your pain, and about yourself.

[Sound of door opening]

DS: And don't forget the cheque.

[Case #73. Ivor Payne. Transcript of tape recording, Friday 9 November, 19 —]

IP: That was good advice you gave me last week, Dr. Spot.

DS: So. . . the pain is gone?

IP: Well, yes and no. First I learned some things from those nogoodnick members of my club. They think that because they've paid their dues, they've got to keep on suffering the pain. If they let themselves get better, then the entrance fee money has been wasted!

DS: What entrance fee money?

IP: I'm surprised you can ask that question, doctor. You are the one who told me about it. If a thing don't cost it's not valued. So, if I'm going to invest in a pain, the least I can do is value it. And if I value it, why should I lose it? Maybe there's some way I can enjoy keeping it.

DS: Ivor, I think you didn't understand me.

IR: Oh yes. I'm sure I did. I decided to look at my pain as an investment. Why, I asked myself, do I only get my pain at certain times? Like when I come to visit you.

DS: And the answer?

IP: Because I know it's going to cost me money. And that's a real pain in the arse. So I've got rid of it. I've "reframed" it like you told me once. Instead of having a pain in the arse because I think I should be paying you, instead I've given myself a pain in the *pipik* - but it's giving me a pleasant message. . .

DS: What sort of message?

IP: It's reminding me that by not paying you, I'm shafting you! Dr Spot. Why are you looking like that?

DS: I've got this sudden twinge in the arse . .



Time Was When. . .
[The Third Age]

Time Was When (The Third Age)

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Joe Sinclair finds sex quite a bore
And complains that his height isn't more,
Saying: "I'd give the earth
To achieve soixante-neuf
But I never ever get past sixtyfour."

Many are culled but few are frozen

Time was when . . .

. . . life began at forty - or so Sophie Tucker would have had us believe. (She, you may recall, was billed as the “last of the Red Hot Mommas” - but more of that anon.)

Nowadays, as we of the Circle of Friends know full well, it doesn’t begin until 50. “And I’m gonna start living all over again,” Sophie used to sing. And so say all of us!

Time was when . . .

. . . we used to shock our parents. Now we are more likely to shock our children. . . . banishing a child to its room was a punishment. Now they’ve got a hi-fi system, a TV set, video games and a computer; it’s no longer a punishment, it’s a reward.

. . . education was the prerogative of “youngsters”. Now the Open University and the University of the Third Age in the UK boasts a greater alumni of mature students than the entire ivy-covered and red-brick university population.

And this brings me back conveniently to Sophie Tucker. I was privileged to be a guest at a dinner party in a Soho night club where she was appearing. It was in 1957. A young woman, with whom I was enjoying a delightful friendship, worked for a theatrical agency and Sophie Tucker was one of their clients. My friend asked me to join her for her firm’s celebratory dinner at the club.

It was tremendously exciting for me - not long out of college - and I will never forget her performance which included the legendary numbers *Some of These Days* and *My Yiddishe Momma*. The evening was even more auspicious when our party was joined by Lionel and Joyce Blair, the English equivalent of Fred and Adele Astaire, (Lionel, now well into his seventies, still appears regularly on TV quiz and chat shows). Also in our party was the singer Alma Cogan who sadly and tragically died at a very young age.

As for my friend Jean - to misquote a Noel Coward lyric: “I wonder what happened to her?” But I do recall that her kindness and generosity extended to another invitation that year. This was to the Royal Command Variety Show at the London Palladium, where several of her agency’s clients were appearing. I still treasure the programme I acquired that day. Indeed, I have it before me as I type these words. The cast of artistes were such as to gladden the hearts and souls of anyone whose memories stretch back those almost 50 years.

My apologies for the poor quality of these reproductions, scanned from the well-thumbed pages of the old programme. But you will certainly recognise Judy Garland (she performed *We’re a Couple of Swells* accompanied by Jimmy Brooks - “Who he?”), Mario Lanza (*Donkey Serenade* and *Be My Love*), Count Basie and the full orchestra! (*April in Paris* and *One O’clock Jump*), and Gracie Fields (*Sally* and *The Biggest Aspidistra in the World*).

Other performers that evening (mainly of interest to Brits!) included Tommy Steele, Tommy Cooper, Winifred Atwell, Arthur Askey, Vera Lynn, Markova, Alma Cogan, Frankie Vaughan, Dickie Valentine, Norrie Paramour and his Orchestra, Dennis Lotis, The Crazy Gang, Ben Lyon, Max Bygraves, Dickie Henderson, Harry Secombe, Bob Monkhouse . . . and many others.

Names and memories to conjure with. And perhaps any “chutzpah” of which I have been guilty in detailing these very personal reminiscences will be tempered by memories you have had stirred by these names.

Finally, back again to Sophie Tucker, with a couple of quotations:
“From birth to 18 a girl needs good parents; from 18 to 35 she needs good looks; from 35 to 55, good personality; from 55 on she needs good cash. I’m saving my money.”

“I’ve been rich and I’ve been poor. Believe me, honey, rich is better.”

Sophie Tucker’s life spanned 82 years from 1884 to 1996 and she continued working right up to the day she died.



Sophie Tucker as she appeared that evening

In Memoriam

Alistair Cooke



One of my journalistic idols died on March 30, 2004.. It did not come as a surprise. One month earlier he had announced that he was ceasing to broadcast his weekly Letter From America. This was after 58 years and 2,869 broadcasts. In all that time he had missed only three. It was clear that nothing other than desperately bad health could have been the reason for his decision. He was 95 years of age; the oldest person on the British airwaves.

His style was always riveting without recourse to the sensationalism favoured by other journalists. He often linked his description of current news stories to events that had occurred decades earlier. He would go off at one tangent and then another, always enthralling, and unerringly at the end of his fifteen minute broadcast would return to his subject naturally and inevitably.

I used to listen to his weekly broadcasts on our old family wireless set (not quite a cat's whisker, but not far removed!) with my grandfather, from the time they started shortly after World War II. Radio broadcasts and card games, were the only activities I shared with the old gentleman. I also loved radio variety programmes, but their humour was wasted on my mother's father - an immigrant from the Ukraine. Alistair Cooke's gentle humour, however, and his clear English diction, were very much appreciated.

Cooke published 12 books including *Alistair Cooke's America* (1973), which sold more than 800,000 copies in hard cover.

He received four Emmy awards from the US Academy of Television Arts & Sciences, three George Foster Peabody awards for broadcasting, and he was made an honorary knight commander of the Order of the British Empire.

Alistair Cooke, the consummate Englishman, became a US citizen in 1941.

He did much for Anglo-American relations. He was always an inspiration to me and I hope I may reflect some of his values and high standards in this column I send in the reverse direction.

In Memoriam

It's Still Happening



Dr Winifred Rushforth OBE died in 1983. Her obituary reveals that she died at the age of 98. This is almost a travesty. She was, in fact, ageless.

I was astonished recently to discover in a group of at least a dozen participants at a personal growth workshop, that I was the only one to know of Winifred Rushforth. Sic transit . . . Nurturing Potential is a fitting vehicle through which to revive many of my own memories of Winifred, to remind others of what this remarkable woman achieved during her remarkable lifetime, and to introduce “newcomers” to some of her philosophical and sociological concepts.

This aim will be hard to achieve. How does one convey, in words, the profound influence that she had on all who came in contact with her? Born in 1885, she qualified as a medical doctor in Edinburgh in 1908 and then went as a medical missionary to India, where she worked as a surgeon and hospital administrator, and specialised in helping Indian women with health problems.

In 1929 she returned to Britain and, after a period of training at the Tavistock Clinic, became a practising psychiatrist in Edinburgh, where she founded the Davidson Clinic to bring family therapy to the community – an achievement that was recognised by the award of her OBE.

Her vision was always to help people achieve their true potential and to develop their true selves. Amongst many who were deeply inspired by her insights was Charles, Prince of Wales who – at the suggestion of Sir Laurens van der Post - made a private visit to her in 1983, shortly before her death. Thirteen years later he was to unveil a memorial to her in Edinburgh. Entitled *The Dreamer*, this is a sculpture by Chris Hall which reflects that tireless and enigmatic woman’s interest in dream therapy.

In a postscript to her posthumously published autobiography *Ten Decades of Happenings* ^[1] the editor has written: “When Winifred died she was in the company of three close friends, one of whom subsequently remarked that she had been on “sparkling” form during her last morning, completely alert and enjoying life to the full.” Her spirit clearly remained undimmed throughout her life. “. . . this spirit will continue to burn in the psyches of many who in some way had the privilege of being in contact with a remarkable and truly loving lady.”

For many years Dr Rushforth was a popular TV and radio personality, discussing her work and telling Bible stories with psychological insight. In what was conceivably her most popular book ^[2], this amazing pioneer in the human potential and creative group movements explored the way the unconscious impinges on our everyday behaviour. Here are some insights from that book.

“For we human beings also have, locked up in our individual psyche, energies awaiting release. Within the last few decades, something very intimate and extremely relevant to our lives has come to light. This is the fact demonstrated by Harold Burr of Yale University that every cell of the human body has a charge of electro-magnetic force. This means that you and I have in our bodies an immense storehouse of energy which we constantly employ and which we never cease to pour out into the environment. Whither? We can ask the question, but so far the answer can only be that we do not know to what infinity it is reaching.”

“A prescription against ageing given to me fifty years ago might be helpful. ‘This year and each subsequent year attempt to achieve three things. Make a new friend, acquire a new skill, learn a new language.’ Even if only one of these is acted on it will delay the onset of ageing. You may notice they refer to heart, head and hand – friendship awakens love, language acquisition bestirs the mind, and even ageing hands can be used to weave or at least to spin the wool, to draw, or better still to paint or find other ways of making pictures, to write. Suppose that today you begin to work at your autobiography – it will be surprisingly interesting.”

And from *Life’s Currency* ^[3]

“We read that Moses was given a puzzling answer . . . “I am that I am”. We may remember, however, that it was not given in English! My orthodox Jewish friend tells me that in Hebrew the verb to be has a beauty and depth of significance that we totally miss in translation. In the German language we get *Ich bin* and *Ich werde*. The former is “here and now I am” – *ego sum* – but the latter is more, the dynamic something is becoming (happening), something is at work, and who knows what the outcome will be?”

“What do you want to do? This question needs to be honoured all through our lives. It cannot be the only guide but unless we ask it of ourselves and others, we miss the fun. “I want” is the word of the instinctual life, of the libido, the psychic

energy demanding fulfilment. “You ought” becomes “I ought”, necessary controlling influence, but frustrating if allowed to be the only criterion of how we live. The art of living must, I think, consist in finding the right balance between I want and I ought in our lives. Tension is inevitable between them, but tension is creative.”

“Without the way there is no going.

Without the truth there is no knowing.

Without the life there is no living”

[1] Ten Decades of Happenings, Gateway Books, London, 1984

[2] Something is Happening, Turnstone Press, 1981, 2nd edition published by Gateway Books, 1983

[3] Life's Currency, Time, Money & Energy, Gateway Books, Bath, 1983

Survival Strategies in Later Life

The following ten survival strategies are loosely based on *Long Distance Caregiving: A Survival Guide for Far Away Caregivers*, by Angela Heath, published by Impact. It has been adapted to enable it to be applied and used by older persons themselves rather than by their care-givers.

1. ORGANISATION

Keep all important information and documents in a readily accessible place and keep a clear note of where it is to be found.

2. NETWORK

Make a list of all those in your local and extended community who may be available for help. These to include neighbours, friends, relatives, health consultants, religious, civic and social organisations. Ensure that house keys are available at least with neighbours. Arrange for network members to contact you if they suspect a problem. Check also with local community ageing networks such as Age Concern or Help the Aged to familiarise yourself with local helpful services.

3. TRAVELLING

Be sure you are acquainted with all travel options available in your area and ensure that you take advantage of all special arrangements and discounts to which you are entitled. Make sure that your car is regularly serviced, taxed and insured and that your driving licence is current.

4. SHOPPING

Take advantage of all shopping options, such as community free bus services and Internet shopping.

5. PAPERWORK

Locate and make readily accessible all legal, financial and insurance documents, including birth certificates, social security cards, marriage or divorce decrees, wills and power of attorney. Identify bank accounts, titles, sources of income and obligations, and vehicle, life, homeowners and medical insurance papers. Store documents in a secure place such as a safe-deposit box, a fireproof box, or with your bank, solicitor or accountant. Make duplicate copies where appropriate. Provide a clear indication of where all documents are to be found as mentioned in item 1 above.

6. LEGAL AND FINANCIAL MATTERS

It is essential that you draw up a Will and check it regularly - at least once a year - to make sure it is still relevant and appropriate. Provide instructions for giving Power of Attorney to an appropriate person. Ensure that this is known to your banker, insurance broker, solicitor, and/or accountant in addition to whoever has been named as Executor and/or Trustee.

7. FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS

This should be covered by an appropriate note in your Will, but should also be made known to your next of kin and your legal and financial adviser.

8. DEVELOP A CONTINGENCY PLAN

Ideally you will have a family meeting, decide what are the primary needs, who is best able to do what, and then draw up a contingency plan and agenda to cover potential situations and requirements. All family members should have a written copy of the plan. Fix further meetings at regular intervals, in the knowledge that plans may need to be altered if your circumstances change.

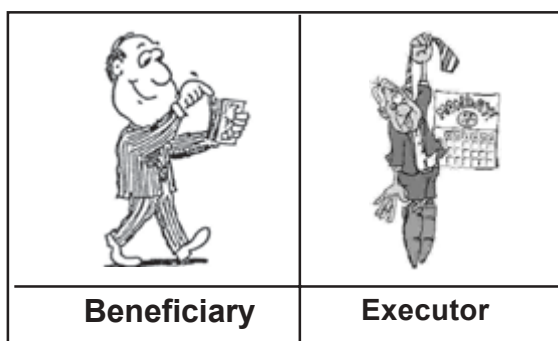
9. EXPLORE RELOCATION OPTIONS

With the possibility that your existing domestic arrangements may become untenable, you are well advised to consider how and where a relocation may be appropriate, particularly if your concern is to be of as little inconvenience as possible to others. Both financial and emotions costs should be taken into account.

10. TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

Draw up a plan that is easy to implement and easy to maintain whereby your health and fitness may be assured as greatly as possible. Discuss any plan involving physical effort with your medical practitioner.

Let's Choose Executors and Talk of Wills^[1]



American comedy, it has always seemed to me (and, as a presumptuous Brit, I am ready to be taken to task about this) follows certain fairly rigid traditions.

In the early days of Vaudeville [It's dead you know! Or so they say.] there was a strong Irish tradition that still, interestingly, persists as part of generally popular regional stand-up comedy in the UK. I think, for example, of Eddie Foy Jr. and George M. Cohan (whose surname later astonished me, as I felt the "a" needed to be replaced by an "e").

But I get ahead of myself.

As World War I ended and World War II approached and was left behind, the Irish stand-up comedian also became surpassed . . . by his Jewish counterpart. It must have been someone like Jack Benny who started the trend. George Burns certainly continued it. Milton Berle figured in there somewhere. And then, from the 1960s onwards, a whole slew of New York style Jewish comics took over: Jackie Mason, Alan Sherman, Shelly Berman, Mort Sahl, Woody Allen, Lenny Bruce, Jerry Seinfeld^[2] . . .

In a way their humor was like a conscience for the American public.

From the background of their own hyperactive, emotional and neurotic temperaments their humor became a sort of touchstone for American worries and concerns. If you could laugh at their problems (better still, if you could identify with them and laugh at your own) life became a little easier to bear. This served to fulfil America's emotional needs.

Anyway, this is something of a deviation from my main theme. It came about because I was trying to recall which of that post-World War II group of Jewish-American comedians came up with the sketch about reading a last will. After going through all the bequests very amusingly, he ended with: "And to Louis, who never expected to be mentioned in my will . . . 'Hello Louis!'"

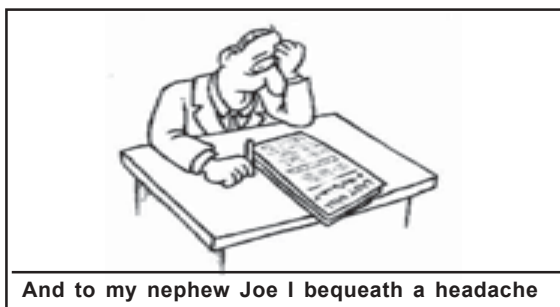
My late Aunt Lily took this a stage further when preparing her own will. After all, the fictitious Louis is presumed to have been disliked, or at least ill-regarded, whereas the late, lamented sole sister of my even later lamented mother, loved me dearly.

She knew (or suspected) that a bequest from her fairly modest estate would prove embarrassing to me, since there were family members in far greater financial need than myself. How then to show her appreciation of the love, the many kindnesses and the help I had given her during her later, frail and pain-filled years? She found an answer.

She appointed me Executor of her estate.

It was a generous act of love, of trust, of gratitude, and of friendship.

(So who needs enemies?)



You presumably know that the duties and obligations of an executor are to administer the estate of a deceased person and to ensure that that person's instructions are carried out as far as possible in accordance with their known and expressed wishes.

At this point let me introduce you to the psychological concept of Drivers.

Drivers are powerful messages that are stamped on our personalities from childhood and compel us to behave in specific ways. They have developed from injunctions (i.e. "don't" messages) that we took on board from our parents and other authority figures. "Don't be such a cry-baby." "Don't do that . . . you know it upsets me." "Don't waste so much time." "Don't give up so easily." "Don't settle for second best."

Over a period of time, these messages develop into five main Drivers that are the result of absorbing the injunctions and are (in the same order): Be Strong, Please Me, Hurry Up, Try Hard, Be Perfect. Normally one of these is more prominent than the others, although they all tend to have some influence on our behaviour patterns. An over-emphatic desire to obey our Drivers will lead to neurosis.

Woody Allen is Drivers personified. He is ruled by them all, and they drive him to the brink of despair . . . and sometimes beyond.

I feel I have a lot in common with Woody Allen.

But, back to Aunt Lily.

Aunt Lily was a caring and considerate person. She took a number of important and helpful precautions in anticipation of her demise. A clear Last Will and Testament was drawn up, spelling out precisely what bequests were to be given and to whom. She very sensibly and considerately invested sufficient funds in savings bonds to cover these bequests. She named her dearest friend as residual beneficiary, so that whatever was left in the estate, after dealing with the main bequests, would have a home to go to. She also took out a funeral plan to ensure that her executor would not have to concern himself with the cost of the funeral. She even left a little cash, hidden around her small (sheltered accommodation) apartment, so that initial expenses could be met in advance of the will being proven.

And then she somewhat inconsiderately became ill and died. In the process she overlooked a number of rather crucial matters.

She did not - could not - anticipate her sudden illness, the pain of which rendered her incapable of her habitual power of concentration. Nor did she anticipate that it would involve hospitalisation and death in hospital. Her pronounced intention was to die in her own bed, causing as little trouble as possible to friends and family.

Correspondence had thus been allowed to accumulate during the several weeks prior to her hospitalisation. Envelopes containing cheques and bills were unopened. Official enquiries remained unanswered. And once in hospital, she was so sedated that she was quite unable to give instructions as to how they should be handled - even had she recalled that they existed.

During her long lifetime of almost 90 years, I doubt if she ever threw away a single piece of paper. Her failure to discuss the enormous accumulation of material with her proposed executor meant that every piece of paper had to be sifted and studied.

Amongst the unopened (or unattended) correspondence were such items as income tax refunds and housing benefit demands which were large enough (having regard to the fairly moderate size of her estate) to make a significant impact on the execution of the will.

This meant that the modest balance of the estate that she anticipated going to her dear friend was either going to be much larger than she ever imagined, or subject to so much difficult negotiation that all her plans to avoid complication had gone for nothing.

Most important of all was the fact that she had overlooked the Drivers of her nephew and executor Joe, who felt obligated to safeguard as much as possible for the residual beneficiary (Be Perfect and Please You), to do it as expeditiously as possible (Hurry Up) and to be constantly critical of his own failure to do so (Try Harder). The only Driver that didn't get an obvious airing was Be Strong. At the end of the day, however, and at the end of his tether, this was the only one that had real significance.

So what did I do? And what did I learn from the exercise? And what advice would I like to pass on to you, dear Reader?

There is a simple solution for the executors of most estates who wish to avoid much of the work and hassle. But as with all simple solutions, it comes at a cost. It is to employ a professional to do the work of administration for you. In the UK, this is usually a solicitor - in the legal sense, of course!



“She’s a solicitor, you know?”
“I never doubted it!”

I considered this course, but the minimum cost of legal intervention would have amounted to almost half the anticipated residual bequest to my aunt's friend and would have considerably offended my Be Perfect Driver. So I determined to do the job myself.

Three months later I was still trying to complete the administration of the estate. My task had been rendered much more difficult than it needed to be as a result of sheer inefficiency on the part of various official bodies (so what else is new?) complicated by the even greater inefficiency of the British postal service. .

The most valuable lesson I learned from this exercise, which I'm now going to pass on to you, is that the best way to ensure that the executor of your will has a relatively hassle-free time (particularly if he's as Driver-ridden as I am) is to make him or her the residual beneficiary of the estate.

Thus: “To my dear friend [where the friend is the intended residual beneficiary] I leave £1,000 [or whatever amount you determine] or the cash residue of my estate whichever is the lesser.” Then: “To my [executor] I bequeath the residue of my estate.”

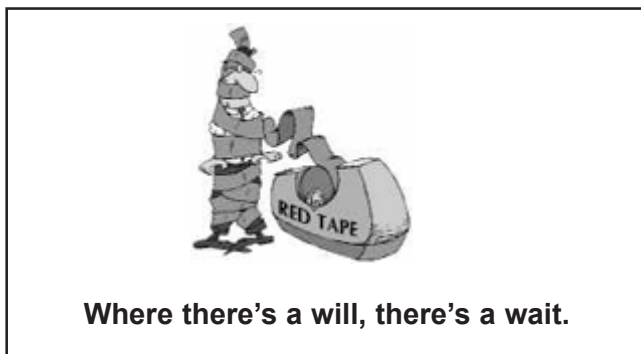
In that way the friend is guaranteed the desired amount [£1,000 in this case] provided that at least that amount is left in the estate once all creditors have been paid, and the hapless executor has only his own potential bequest to worry about when considering whether or not to pay for professional help.

His Be Perfect driver will be satisfied by the excellence of his handling of the estate and complying with the testator's wishes; his Hurry Up driver can be assuaged by paying for assistance in the knowledge that it will incur costs to nobody but himself."

And the first thing I did once I had learned this lesson was to change my own will. My best friend is no longer my executor. After all, as I suggested earlier, "With friends like me . . . " And I'd hate to have someone write an article like this about me when I'm gone.

On September 12, 2004 I shall be throwing a barbecue party to celebrate a rather special birthday of my own. I won't reveal the age, but the candles will stretch from one end of the garden to the other. It would have been the occasion, too, of Aunt Lily's 90th and I had planned a really big event. Well, it was not to be. But we will be having a ceremony of scattering her ashes in the brook at the end of the garden, and we'll raise a glass and toast the memory of a really brave and thoughtful lady who taught me a lot in life, and has ensured that the lessons would not end with her death.

POSTSCRIPT



One of the more frustrating areas of activity for executors of probated wills has always been dealing with the bureaucratic services involved therein. Perhaps every generation believes that their situation is the worst. I am no exception to this belief. Let me describe a few of the difficulties that were put in my path.

It took one month before the Grant of Administration was obtained from the Probate Office. They claimed to have sent the document three times by normal (second-class!!) mail before finally, after considerable pressure by me, they sent it Recorded Delivery, and it arrived.

Was this the fault of the Royal Mail? Or was it inefficiency on the part of the Probate Office? One will never know.

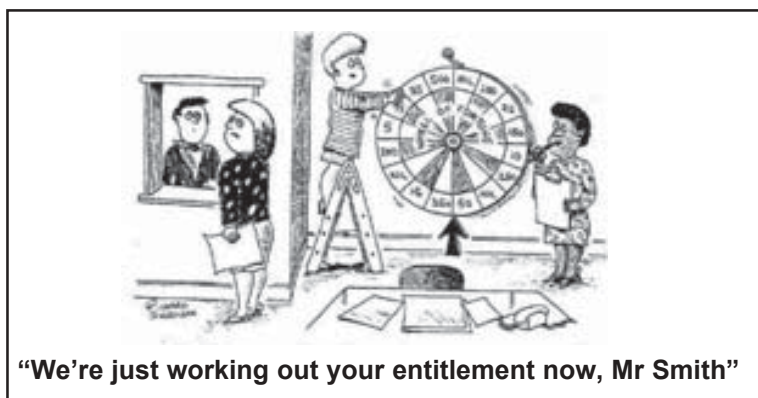
It took three weeks for the bank to release the funds from the estate's blocked bank account. The bank claimed it had never received the completed withdrawal forms that I had returned in their own stamped-addressed envelope. It required my attendance at their local branch office, and insistence that they fax a new set of completed forms to their head office, before the funds were finally released. And then it took one week and three phone calls (each one assuring me that "the cheque is in the post") before this part was finalised.

Was this the fault of the Royal Mail? Or was it inefficiency on the part of the bank? How can one tell?

Shortly after Aunt Lily died a statement arrived from the Housing Benefit department showing her to be in credit to the amount of £640. I asked for this to be settled by cheque. The reply was to send me a demand on the Estate in the sum of £505 as being underpayment of a required reimbursement of benefit. I immediately raised an objection and asked for a proper explanation. Three months later I am still without a response.

This is clearly a confusion between the local government department responsible for sheltered accommodation and the private organisation that they employ to administer the system. Will it ever be resolved? Who can say?

Public sector service providers, such as Housing Benefit organisations, used to take the words "public" and "service" literally. Now they might more appropriately be named Public Service Strategy Providers. The shell is still there, but the contents too often nowadays are brain dead.



After six weeks of frustration, I made an official complaint to the Royal Mail Customer Services Centre. This was in respect of the non-delivery of the Grant of Administration, but I also had failed to receive my pay slip - mailed a week

earlier - and a review copy of a book. Subsequently I made a further complaint, to the effect that I had had no response to my earlier complaint and that, in the meantime, another copy of the book and my current month's pay slip had also not been delivered. Nor had a bank statement that had been posted to me two weeks earlier.

I referred to my previous conversation with a Mr David White. My telephone interlocutor, a woman, said she had never heard of him. I pointed out that he was one of her colleagues. "Do you realise we have over 300 people working here?" she demanded brusquely.

I couldn't resist the response: "What a pity you're not all out delivering letters."

The comment did not go down too well, but it made me feel a hell of a lot better.

^[1] Shakespeare's Richard II

^[1] And lest I be accused of sexism, let me not forget the female counterparts of these comics: Sophie Tucker, Fanny Brice, Joan Rivers, Bette Midler, Sarah Silverman and many others.

Here are some old one-liners you might like to be reminded of.

Rodney Dangerfield: "I told my psychiatrist that everyone hates me. He said I was being ridiculous; everyone hasn't met me yet."

Groucho Marx: "Either he's dead or my watch has stopped."

George Burns: "This is the sixth book I've written, which isn't bad for a guy who's read only two."

Mel Brooks: "Tragedy is when I cut my finger. Comedy is if you fall into an open sewer and die."

Oscar Levant: "A politician is a man who will double cross that bridge when he comes to it."

Woody Allen: "It's not that I'm afraid to die; I just don't want to be there when it happens."

The Joy of Senior Moments



This morning I woke up.

This is not an unusual occurrence. On average it happens to me at least once every day.

What was unusual on this occasion, however, was that I did not ask myself such questions as “What day is this?”, “Where am I?”, or even (it has been known!) “Who am I?”.

No! This morning I woke up with one clear thought in my mind: “I have to write my article for the *Fifty Plus* website”.

This thought gave me enormous pleasure. There is little more dispiriting, having reached “a certain age”, than the vista spread before one of a day devoid of any rewarding activity. A bleak panoramic view of . . . nothing - punctuated by an occasional TV programme, a trip to the barbershop, a visit by the cleaning-lady (usually while I am seated in the barber’s chair, having failed to look at the calendar blue-tacked to the refrigerator door).

So this morning’s thought heralded the excitement of an unusually constructive activity.

I got out of bed . . . [No! That is not as stupid a statement as it sounds! Read on.] . . . put on my dressing gown, and proceeded downstairs to make my morning cup of tea. I set the kettle to boil and opened the refrigerator to remove the milk. At which point my eye was caught by a post-it note on the fridge door, reminding me that my *Fifty Plus* article was due.

“*Then felt I as some watcher of the stars, when a new planet swims into his ken*” (or words to that effect). I had actually anticipated the activity without the needed prompt of the post-it note. What a pity Keats is dead. I could have given him an idea for a new stanza. But, I thought, while the water is boiling in the kettle, I might as well switch the computer on . . . Just to make sure. You understand.

As I went down to the office I spotted mail lying on the inside front doormat. I picked it up and took it into the office, noticing that among the junk mail and obvious bills, was a hand-addressed small package. This is quite an event. One that needs nurturing. One that needs the suspense of prolonged anticipation. So I decided to leave it until I had opened the rest of the mail. But first I would throw the junk mail, unopened, into the wastepaper basket.



The wastepaper basket is full. The three items of junk mail can barely be inserted. So I remove the liner, tie it up, and take it to the wheelie-bin at the front door. As I open the door and insert the rubbish into the bin, I become aware that I am still wearing nothing but a dressing gown. I hastily close the door and start to climb the two flights of stairs to my bedroom.

At the first floor landing I notice that the milk bottle is on the kitchen top. It should be in the refrigerator, I think, and then remember that I was preparing a cup of tea. I enter the kitchen. The kettle has boiled. So long ago that the water has become cold. So I switch it on again. I put some milk in a cup and take the bottle over to the refrigerator, where my eye is caught by a post-it note reminding me to do an article for the Fifty Plus.

I am trapped in a panic of indecision. What should I do first? Should I wash and dress? Should I make my tea? Should I start on the article? The options resolve themselves into one as the pop from the kettle tells me the water is once more boiled. I put a tea bag into a cup and pour hot water on top. Then I return to the refrigerator for the milk, which serves to remind me that I've already poured some into another cup. Good. I've actually remembered something without prompting.

Or with very little prompting. I put the milk back and then realise I need it for my cereal. I take it out again, put cereal in a bowl, add the milk, and put the bottle back into the refrigerator.

I am on a roll!

I pick up the bowl of cereal and go up to the bathroom to wash and shave. I put the bowl of cereal on the bathroom shelf. I wash. Then I reach for my cup of tea, but my hand grasps a cereal bowl. Where did I put my tea? Of course. I must have left it in the office when I went down to switch on the computer. Well, I had better get it before it gets too cold to drink.

I dash down the stairs and am almost at ground level when the front doorbell rings. I hurry to the door and am just about to open it when I realise that I am completely naked. I look through the peephole and spy a man in some sort of uniform. "What do you want?" I shout. "Electricity," he says. "To read your meter." "You'll have to come back another time," I say. "That's all right," he replies, "I'll stick a card in your letterbox and you can take the reading yourself."

The card drops onto the doormat. I pick it up and take it into the office where I spot some unopened mail and an unopened package. I am feeling very dry-throated now and rather cold. I need a drink and I need to dress. Where's my tea? Oh, yes. In the bathroom .

When I get back to the bathroom I notice that the cup of tea has metamorphosed into a bowl of cereal. Strange, I think. But my wits have not completely vanished. If the cereal is in the bathroom, then the tea must be in the kitchen. Well, the tea can wait. So I eat the cereal, standing in the bathroom.

Then I go into the bedroom to get dressed, but now I really, desperately need my morning cuppa. So back down to the kitchen where, wonder of wonders, a cup of tea awaits me. Icy cold. I stick it in the microwave oven, set the timer at one minute, and press the switch. Sparks start to fly. I hastily switch the microwave off and open the door. The cup has a metallic painted rim. I pour the tea into the sink and turn the kettle on.

By dint of concentration and perseverance, I force myself to remain in the kitchen until the tea is prepared, then I take it to the bedroom while I dress. My eye lights on the copy of the Radio Times that I took to bed last night, intending to watch some TV, but falling asleep before I could even find the page I wanted. I pick it up, sitting on the bed, and turn to today's programmes. Gosh, I'm in danger of missing Bargain Hunt. Where's the remote? If I go looking for it, I shall miss the start of the programme. What did we used to do before remotes? I press the button on the left-hand side of the TV. Remarkable! It comes on. Even stranger, it is set to BBC 1. I lean back on the pillow and prepare to enjoy the show. . .



This afternoon I woke up.

This is not an unusual occurrence. What is unusual is that I am lying on top of the bed, the bedroom television is on and is showing an episode of *Murder She Wrote*. That's very peculiar, because it is an afternoon programme.

I get out of bed. [Normally, after an afternoon doze, it's an armchair I get out of.] I have to have lunch before it's time for dinner. I'm fully dressed, but my chin feels somewhat bristly. Have I forgotten to shave? Well, I'll attend to that after lunch.

Down in the kitchen I open the refrigerator and take out an instant, microwaveable meal. On closing the fridge door I spot a post-it note reminding me to produce an article for *Fifty Plus*. I stand there paralysed by indecision. Do I eat my meal or write my article? The answer comes in a blinding flash. Time and motion. Wonderful. In the four minutes it takes the meal to heat up, I can switch the computer on and be ready to start working immediately I've finished eating. I put the meal into the microwave and go downstairs.

In the office I am faced by some unopened mail and an unopened package.

The black screen of the computer is a silent accusation. I switch the computer on and open an envelope. As I suspected from its appearance, it is a gas bill. This strikes a chord and I look at the papers on the desk again. Of course. There is a card for the electricity meter. I pick it up and go into the garage where the meter is located. But I don't have a pen. I put the card down and go back to the office to find a pen.

A sudden pang of hunger reminds me that I have put my lunch into the microwave. It must surely be ready by now. The meter reading can wait. I go up to the kitchen and take the meal out of the microwave. It is strangely cold. The microwave must be broken. I put it in again, set the timer for four minutes, and switch on. The light goes on inside and the meal starts turning. How strange. It seems to be working again. Now, what can I do during the four minutes? Well, three minutes actually now. Let me think. Hmm. Right! I'll read the meter.

I start down the stairs and then stop. Where was I going? Suddenly the microwave pings, indicating the readiness of my meal. Oh well, first things first. I return to the kitchen, collect the meal, take it into the living room, sit myself by the TV and press the remote control. Nothing happens. This is very peculiar. I go to the TV and press the on-switch and it starts up on BBC 1. But I want Channel 4. I press the "4" on the remote, but nothing happens, so I return to the TV, looking at the row of buttons, when my eye is caught by a second remote control on top of the set. I pick it up and press "4". Wonderful. My programme is on.

I return to the sofa, and start eating my meal. It's funny how microwaved food never stays hot as long as food cooked conventionally. Nevertheless I am so hungry that I devour the meal and lie back contentedly to watch the programme.



This evening I woke up.

I had a sense of déjà vu. There was something I had to do. The TV is on. It appears to be the Channel 4 news, and this is strange, because it's a newscast that starts at 7.00 pm. I see the remnants of a microwaved meal on the occasional table. Time to have a cup of coffee, I think.

I get out of the sofa. Into the kitchen. Kettle on. Spoonful of instant coffee into a cup. Milk from the refrigerator.

On the fridge door a post-it note reminds me to produce an article for *Fifty Plus*. Funny. I thought I had already done that. Something nudges the edges of my memory. I rub my face and am surprised at the length of the bristles. My beard must be growing more quickly these days.

Indecision gnaws at my mind. I try mentally to list the things that must be done. There is the article, an evening meal and . . . oh yes, a Robert de Nero movie on the TV that I've been looking forward to watching. I thought I had put a post-it note about the movie on the fridge door, but it seems to have vanished. Well,

there's about 90 minutes to go before the movie. Just time to get started on the article and heat up the remains of the beef stew that I made myself yesterday.

So, down to the office. But, in passing, I note that the garage door is open and the light is on. I switch the light off and close the door. In the office I notice some unopened letters and an unopened package. The computer monitor is blank. I pick up my unopened mail and inadvertently knock the computer mouse off the desk. I bend down to pick it up, bang my head on the pull-out keyboard leaf, and note that the computer has mysteriously come on by itself. My head is hurting too much to start working now; the mail needs opening; dinner needs preparing and eating. And there was something else I was going to do, but I've now forgotten it.

It's really getting very late. I switch off the computer, grab my mail, return to the kitchen, put the stew in the microwave and sit at the table waiting for the food to heat up. In the meantime I start opening the letters. A bank statement, a notice of mortgage increase from the building society, and a telephone bill. The microwave pings before I get around to opening the package.

I've just remembered the other thing. The movie. I take the package and my meal over to the sofa and put the TV on. Then I get a beer out of the fridge and settle down to a relaxing evening after a really strenuous and action-packed day.



I wake up.

My limbs are aching from the position in which I fell asleep watching TV. The movie is over. I saw maybe 20 minutes of it before falling asleep. The package is in my lap. I turn the TV off; turn the lights off; take the package with me, and go to bed.

What a day! The article has not been started. The electric meter has not been read. The card for the meter reading lies forgotten somewhere in the garage. A dirty cereal bowl resides in the bathroom. I have a thundering headache and the beginnings of a bump on my scalp. I have forgotten to shave. My bedroom TV remote control is beside my living room sofa; my computer mouse is lurking somewhere beneath the desk, and I haven't opened my mysterious package.

Before going to bed I open the package. Inside is a smaller package. Inside that is a small envelope. Inside that is a postcard on which is written: "Dear Joe, I hope that this will serve to remind you that your article for the Fifty Plus Circle is now overdue. Get cracking." (Signed) The Brit. (aka Joe Sinclair)

Who dares suggest that the life of a geriatric retiree is dull or boring?