

The Secret Life of Corporations:

Understanding the True Nature of Business

A Management Primer for the 21st Century

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(Excerpt of Chapter 5 plus Full References and Table of Contents)

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CHAPTER FIVE

On Consulting to Selves, Groups, and Corporate Communities: From Individuals to Groups to Organizations

In this chapter I pay homage to the psychologists and social scientists who have made significant contributions to my thinking, and to show the continuities between their ideas and mine. Ultimately, these ideas have a practical and applied value that I demonstrate in this and the following chapters. This essay has three parts: an introduction to DST which includes a recap of the history of systems theory; a tour through the theoretical jungle of modern Freudian personality theories with special emphasis on Harry Stack Sullivan; and finally an effort to connect all this theory to the needs of organizations and organizational consultants. Although ambitious, this chapter attempts to show how DST can help us better understand individuals and organizations by seeing both as complex systems.

Of Bees and Men: The Emergent Nature of Living Systems

CONSIDER THE HONEYBEE. Her body possesses the classic insect anatomy of head, thorax, and abdomen. She has wings, compound eyes, and antennae. Her distinguishing features include a stinger with which to defend herself and leg hairs and sacs with which to collect pollen. A perfectly adequate description of a common insect, right?

Well, only up to a point.

The honeybee interacts with other honeybees. She uses an elaborate communication “dance” to inform the others about sources of food. She cooperates with the others, with those of similar and different caste, to collect and process the food, to protect the group, to raise young, and to procreate. But even this second-level discussion misses an essential and vital point for understanding the honeybee.

The honeybee is a hive creature, a member of a community, which in itself is a super-organism, with its own infrastructure, precise divisions of labor, and logic for perpetuating and reproducing itself — a logic that subordinates the good of the individual honeybee to the good of the whole.

There is yet another perspective on the honeybee. The hive itself does not exist in isolation but in an ecological context that includes hive-environment interactions. For example, modern bees and modern flowers have co-evolved; neither existed, nor could exist, in its present form without the other. Bees of the hive have a definite impact on their environment and vice versa. This level too must enter into any full discussion, and understanding, of the honeybee.

The psychoanalytically-oriented organizational consultant is like a biologist, trained in insect anatomy, who encounters a beehive for the first time. How to make sense of it, how to study it, how to help it function better in relation to its environment, all become important questions for which the consultant may be at a loss. Perhaps most important — and this must be established early in our discussion — there is nothing inherent in the bee as an individual insect that would lead our mythical insect biologist to predict the hive, or the hive's interaction with its environment. The hive is an emergent quality of bees in the same sense that economic organizations or businesses are an emergent quality of humans. The corporation is not reducible to the individual anymore than the hive is understood by studying bees in isolation. An understanding of the individual is necessary, but not sufficient, to understand the organization. This is the phenomenon of emergence.

The Nested Universe and Dynamic Systems Theory

EMERGENTISM IS A DOCTRINE that provides "... a way of interpreting evolution without having recourse to mechanistic, vitalistic, reductionist, and preformationist ideas" (Gould, 1967, p. 474). Emergentism seeks to explain living phenomena, including mental life, as *dis*-continuous evolution. At the same time, the living world, i.e., the biosphere, is understood as an interconnected succession of levels, both distinct from yet related to each other, like Chinese boxes or Russian dolls. That is, one level emerges from the other, but once it does, it operates independently from the preceding level. Emergentism seeks to be consistent with the data of evolutionary biology, yet is in contrast to the gradualism of Darwin, who felt that new forms arose gradually and were continuous with older ones. The principles of emergentism have been embodied recently in the theories of punctuated equilibrium and symbiogenesis. Punctuated equilibrium is an attempt by evolutionary biologists to explain the life cycle of species and the fact that the fossil record does not support the gradualistic version of evolution (Eldredge, 1985; Eldredge & Gould, 1972).

Symbiogenesis is the idea that new species emerge when two or more species come together in symbiotic and permanent relationship, as in the case of lichen (Margulis et al., 2002). The many levels are interconnected, and it is not possible to fully comprehend any element without taking into account its levels above and below. For example, in human systems, organelles constitute cells, cells constitute tissues, tissues constitute organs, organs constitute organisms, organisms constitute families, families constitute tribes, tribes constitute societies, and societies constitute nations. The language changes slightly depending on which specific aspects of the human system are under discussion (e.g., tribal communities vs. corporate communities) but the principle remains the same. The fact of the interconnectedness of levels and the manner in which they are nested, one within the other, is a cornerstone of the present attempt to link psychoanalytic theory of the individual with organizational phenomena. [see Figures 2-1 and 2-2]

Emergence is the first principle in Dynamic Systems Theory (Sirkin, 1992b, 1994c). DST's goal is to provide conceptual and practical links to areas of clinical work that exist semiautonomously but are connected in important ways. These semi-autonomous areas include: individual psychotherapy, group psychotherapy, and organizational consultation. Dynamic Systems Theory seeks to create a framework, albeit loose and imperfect, which can encompass these multiple perspectives.

The Individual Mind in Context: Freud, Sullivan, and the Interpersonal Orientation

EACH LEVEL IMPLICIT in the concept of emergence must be understood on its own terms. Each level has a language in which its key concepts are expressed, a nexus of problems with which it is centrally engaged, and a praxis by which it affects the world. Sigmund Koch (1976) has referred to these as "language communities." *Different language communities must exist between levels, although several language communities may co-exist within levels.* At the level of mind, psychoanalytic theory has evolved the most complex language community and one that has dominated ideology and praxis for almost a century.¹ Yet within the psychoanalytic camp, a number of schools or "dialects" exist and continue to appear year after year (cf. Munroe, 1955). All speak a psychoanalytic "language" and are engaged in the practice of psychotherapy, yet with different emphases and somewhat different goals. Greenberg and Mitchell (1983) have attempted

to bring some order to this “Tower of Psychobabble” by pointing to a deep divergence in psychoanalytic theory, and by grouping theoretical approaches accordingly. This divergence is between drive/structure models, typified by Freud’s original work, and relational/structure models, typified by Sullivan’s contributions.

The Classical Drive Model and Reductionism

ACCORDING TO GREENBERG and Mitchell (1983):

The basic unit in classical theory is the individual psyche, and Freud’s rich and incisive theorizing is framed by that focus Drive/structure model theories are necessarily intrapsychic — the drives by definition originate within the individual mind; the obvious focus of inquiry into drive-derived processes is within the fantasies, wishes, and impulses of the individual (pp. 100-102).

Even in his work most directly concerned with groups and organizations, Freud restates his individualistic and reductionistic bias: “Group psychology is therefore concerned with the individual man” and the so-called “social instinct,” according to Freud, may in fact be reducible to more primitive drives (Freud, 1921/1959, p. 2).

Freud’s reductionism infuses all of his theoretical writings (Sirkin & Fleming, 1982). The drives are essentially the prime movers of the mental mechanism; they provide a constant influx of energy into the psychic engine; these drives must be harnessed, managed, and controlled which is in fact the function of many of the familiar psychic structures and processes (i.e., the ego, defense mechanisms, neurotic symptoms). Many critics of Freud’s drive theory seem to confuse his reductionistic program, and a type of psychoanalysis that results from it, with the drives themselves (cf. Greenberg & Mitchell, 1983). Reductionism, I would agree, is a misguided approach to mind and its social manifestations; at its worst it is a type of scientism that contributes nothing except a false sense of having arrived at, or aiming toward, a first cause. Drives, on the other hand, may be indispensable to a coherent model of mind. Before discussing the necessity of drives, however, let us turn next to an alternative to psychological reductionism.

The Interpersonal Relational Model and Contextualism

THE OPPOSITE OF reductionism is holism, and general systems theory represents one of the more coherent embodiments of holistic principles (von Bertalanffy, 1968). Whereas reductionistic

models attempt to reduce phenomena to smaller and more basic parts, holistic models attempt to build from simple elements to more complex systems.

The two approaches may not be mutually exclusive; perhaps they are complementary, like a telescope that can magnify a constricted field when used from one end or permit more inclusion but less detail when used from the other. We cannot, however, look through both ends simultaneously.

Relational/structure models in psychoanalysis are inherently holistic. They tend not to reduce into elements but rather add elements into more inclusive wholes. Harry Stack Sullivan was an exemplary theorist of this model:

The basic units in Sullivan's interpersonal theory are the interpersonal field and the relational configurations that derive from it. The individual psyche, in this view, is a part and reflection of a larger whole, and is inconceivable outside of a social matrix In Sullivan's system, the self is organized around relational configurations ... structured into the self, which is composed of a collection of prominent "me-you" patterns loosely held together by a set of rationalizations and illusions (Greenberg & Mitchell, 1983, pp. 101-103).

The Interpersonal Theory, while not as neatly consistent and elegant as Freud's theory, nevertheless provides a unique view of the human mind based essentially on context and contextual considerations.

Historical Antecedents of Interpersonal Theory

FOUR GREAT THINKERS of the early Twentieth Century stood solidly beneath Sullivan, supporting his observations and ordering his thoughts: Freud, Meyer, Mead, and Malinowski.

Freud's influence was so pervasive that Sullivan makes little attempt to separate it out: "Needless to say behind all ... are the discoveries of Sigmund Freud" (Sullivan, 1953, p. 16). Clearly though, Sullivan did not swallow Freud whole, but rather chose carefully which elements of classical psychoanalytic theory to include and which to eschew or reject outright. Many concepts, however, were subtly transformed. For example, while he seemed to reject the notion of instincts altogether, he made the concept of "dynamism" a cornerstone of the theory. He defines dynamism as "the relatively enduring pattern of energy transformations which recurrently characterize the organism in its duration as a

living organism” (Sullivan, 1953, p. 103).

There are some interesting parallels between Sullivan’s dynamisms and Freud’s *Q*, a quotient of energy which the latter postulated in his “Project” of 1895 and was the forerunner of the instincts (Sirkin & Fleming, 1982, p. 232). The goal here, for both thinkers, seems to have been to give the laws of physics their due and to acknowledge that all systems, even organic systems, need energy to run; and mental activity was in some way a transformation of this energy. It seems that Sullivan was not strictly anti-reductionist, simply more preoccupied with the way parts come together than how they look broken down or analyzed. He seems at least grounded enough in Nineteenth Century science to sympathize, and try to remain consistent with, Freud-the-reductionistic-scientist.

Adolf Meyer, the father of the psychobiological approach in psychiatry, was among the most powerful and influential psychiatrists of his day. The specifics of his theory need not concern us here since they barely outlasted him, but the influence of his approach had a deep effect on Sullivan and other psychiatrists (Redlich & Freedman, 1966). Psychobiology viewed man as the apotheosis of an evolutionary chain. While somewhat anthropocentric by today’s standards, it nevertheless stressed the connection between the biological level and the human level. Man is first and foremost an animal, but an animal with the mental apparatus to experience himself as both subject and object, which is perhaps his most distinguishing feature. More modern perspectives in psychiatry, e.g., the biopsychosocial approach (Engel, 1980), are clearly derived from Meyer but also acknowledge affinity to a growing body of general systems approaches.

George Herbert Mead was not only among the great philosophers of his day; his influence on American ideas of the self can still be felt (Sirkin, 1990c). Mead was the first to articulate that the self was no thing. The self is a process, an act of being that involves the reflection of appraisals from others and the living out of roles one learns from interpersonal surroundings. The self, according to Mead, is fluid, flickering, continuously self-created, and essentially interpersonal. Sullivan seems to have appreciated the significance of not reifying the self as conveyed in his concepts of “self-system” and “dynamisms.”

Malinowski, through the study of cultural anthropology, enabled Sullivan to move from the individual to the interpersonal field, and to the wider arena of society. The activities and thoughts

of people are only fully comprehensible in the context of social life, its customs and culture, its rules and expectations, language, environmental interactions, and common needs and concerns (Sullivan, 1953, p. 18). Again, Sullivan's continued emphasis on *context* found a natural ally in Malinowski's approach to the study of culture.

The Essence of Interpersonalism

AS WE TRACE the influence of these men and their ideas on Sullivan, we begin to see the essential outlines of Interpersonal Theory. Context becomes all-important, whether biological or social. Full understanding of the self requires a full appreciation of both biological and social effects. Even while acknowledging the profound influence of biology and culture, this conceptualization does not view the self as a passive receptacle of these influences, but as processor, transformer, and transmutter of them as it creates personality from the rhythm and melody of its biological and interpersonal world. Sullivan is anything but a reductionist as he seeks to understand and appreciate this complex dance between self and environment.

This implicit rejection of reductionism qualifies Sullivan as a proto-systems theorist. In this respect he stands in contradistinction to Freud, and most of Freud's followers, who implicitly accepted a reductionist paradigm for science and psychology. By stressing the interactive nature of psychotherapy and the interpersonal and dynamic nature of self, Sullivan recognized the futility of the reductionist paradigm. The interpersonal therapist strives not to reduce down but to expand out:

By widening the patient's awareness of his life, what Sullivan called an 'expansion of the self' is arrived at. One then trusts that the patient can change his own life according to his own canons. Indeed, the therapist carefully avoids acting in a way he hopes will 'cure' the patient. He is interested only in widening the circles of participant-observation for the patient, until a sufficient enrichment of his awareness of his life permits him to change (Levenson, 1991, p. 164).

Both psychoanalytic-drive theories and interpersonalrelational theories are inadequate if they portray the self as passive or wholly derivative. The self is neither "just" a manifestation, or receptacle, of drives, nor is it "simply" a repository of interpersonal experience. *The self is not passive*. Gordon Allport, a contemporary of Sullivan, stressed that the self is constantly "becoming" (Allport,

1955), or to use another of his phrases, that it is a *unitas multiplex* (Allport, 1961). To the extent that this “unity in multiplicity” requires effort, even energy, the self may in fact be the result of dynamic forces within the person. These dynamic forces may just as well be termed “drives,” à la the Freudians, or “dynamisms,” à la Sullivan.

The problem with drive models is the implicit reductionism in the theory, not the drives per se, which are neither atavistic theoretical tendencies (Levenson, 1991, pp. 136-137) nor “the last smoke of evaporating reality,” (Mitchell, 1979) as some have held. The self-system, as any system, requires structures and processes that make it functional. These structures and processes allow it to perform functions necessary to its existence, survival, and growth. They permit the system to interact with other systems and the environment, to function collectively and singularly, to develop and change in ways that are universally ordered. These activities of the system are by definition dynamic, that is, they involve forces, and they are not static.

These forces are not mystical forces, nor are they “metapsychological” (in the sense of “beyond psychology”, a term Freud often used) but are the plain forces inherent in the physical properties of matter and energy. I will go on to suggest that all systems, whether they are self-systems or organizational systems, are dynamic – they are active and interactive and share common features of both structure and process regardless of level, thus the term *Dynamic Systems Theory*.² These issues lie at the heart of mindbody problem, which has plagued philosophers for hundreds of years. By now it will not surprise the reader that I believe that mind is emergent from body and the mind-body “problem” is more a question of agreeing on level (of analysis) and language than metaphysics.

It is the interaction with other systems, with other minds, that is the essential feature of interpersonalism. It is this interaction that leads us naturally to consider metapersonal systems: groups, organizations, and other human social systems. The interpersonal theory is incomplete without a complementary theory of social organization.

Psychoanalysis is primarily a theory pertaining to intrapsychic development and therapy. Early in Freud’s work, he realized the necessity of including significant others, primarily the mother, into his theories. The mother-infant dyad became the cornerstone of most subsequent work involving object relations and

interpersonal methods. Psychoanalysis, with the exception of Freud's incomplete forays into group psychology (Freud, 1921/1959) or his brief discussions of the primal horde (Freud, 1913/1950), primarily concerns individuals or, at most, dyads. The discussion in the following sections takes us well beyond Freud's dyads, and into the realm of the social.

Multiple Minds and Metapersonal Systems: New Levels Require New Levels of Discourse

GENERAL SYSTEMS THEORY. Systems theory is among the most direct attempts to arrive at a coherent body of thought not focused on individuals. A thorough discussion of its origins would take us back at least to the German romanticists and nature philosophers, well beyond the scope of this chapter. The following discussion will not stray beyond the Twentieth Century.

Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1968), biologist and polymath, has suggested the most ambitious statement of a general systems theory. He defines systems as "sets of elements standing in interrelation" and goes on to adumbrate their mathematical and qualitative characteristics (von Bertalanffy, 1968, p. 38ff). One of the core concepts Bertalanffy introduces is "isomorphism," the idea that different systems have similar structures and parallel processes. It is the "interrelations" — not the nature of the elements themselves — that are quintessential in Bertalanffy's theory.

Although his writing is filled with the mathematical equations one often associates with scientific specificity, it is the very generality of his version of systems theory that makes it problematic (Phillips, 1976). Because he deals in so many generalities, von Bertalanffy fails to successfully apply his systems theory to any one body of data or phenomenon. The truth is that general systems theory has fallen somewhat short on its promises.

Bion and the Tavistock Tradition of Group Relations. Wilfred Bion's (1959) *Experiences in Groups* represents a significant departure from any previous psychoanalytic contribution, and is a unique approach to the understanding of groups. Although beginning from a conventional psychoanalytic background, which included an analysis with Melanie Klein, Bion moved beyond conventional theory, even Kleinian theory, by observing that groups functioned as coordinated and intentional wholes. Among his most valuable observations were that groups were capable of functioning at two levels: *the work group level* corresponded to the conscious goals of the group and its members, while *the basic assumption level* corresponded to the unconscious and defensive goals of the group.

Bion identified three types of basic assumption patterns of group attitudes and behavior: dependency, fight-flight, and pairing. Without defining all of these terms in detail, it is sufficient to note that while Bion did not lose sight of the individual, he nevertheless interpreted activities within the group as a manifestation of group goals. His observations and interventions took place at a level above individual psychodynamics, often referred to as the level of “group-as-a-whole.”

Bion was fortunate to work with colleagues at the Tavistock Institute in London who were interested in applying and expanding his ideas to a variety of *in vivo* groups and group experiences (Trist & Murray, 1990). In particular, Ken Rice and Eric Miller (Rice, 1963; 1965; Miller & Rice, 1967) along with their colleagues, have discussed the application of these ideas to work groups and organizations. Especially noteworthy is their attempt to integrate Bion’s psychoanalytic perspective and Lewin’s social field theory (1951) with a general system’s theory approach:³

Within this model, psychopathology may be conceptualized as a breakdown of the control function, a failure to carry out the primary task, and a threat to the survival of the system. In the individual we see breakdown of the ego and emotional regression; in the group, breakdown of leadership and paralysis in basic assumptions; and in the institution, breakdown of the administration, failure to carry out the institutional tasks, and loss of morale. Breakdown of boundary control is the principal manifestation of breakdown in the control function (Kernberg, 1984/1985, p. 403).

By focusing on the parallel processes, or isomorphism, between levels, and the function of boundary as a maintainer of system integrity, this attempt to blend general systems theory and Bionian psychodynamics comes closest to the goals of Dynamic Systems Theory. While efforts to integrate general systems approaches with psychoanalytic approaches are laudable, there are limitations due to significant incommensurabilities among theories. General systems theory, in its current forms, simply claims too much in terms of specific applications from rather general quasi-mathematical formulae (cf. David Berlinski’s (1976) scathing attack on the mathematical assumptions of systems theory). In its desire to be all things to all disciplines, general systems theory has failed to respect the differences between “language communities” among very disparate disciplines.

The application of Kleinian and Bionian theories to larger systems involves other problems. At the root of Klein's object relations theory are the drives of aggression and love, and secondarily, the feelings of anxiety and need for reparation produced by these primary object drives. Klein's work pertains almost exclusively to individual development and the vicissitudes of the individual's attachments to significant objects. Klein's (1946/1975) introduction of the concept of *projective identification*, as one way that internal psychodynamics utilizes and affects others in the social environment, provides a bridge to group phenomena. Bion's contributions build upon Klein's. Basic assumption dependency (one of Bion's group defenses) bears many similarities to the infant's relation to the good object or leader. Basic assumption fight-flight (another group defense), similarly manifests the aggressive-paranoid relationship to the bad object or leader. Basic assumption pairing (Bion's third group defense) may represent the groups' efforts at repairing the compromised object relations caused by the drives (or earlier basic assumptions). The basic assumptions are a defense against anxiety. Among Bion's contributions is his development of a language and terminology at the level of the group, which permitted the development of group-as-a-whole techniques. Bion's contributions are limited, however, by his uncritical incorporation of Klein and Freud. The group-as-a-whole, for Bion, is never more than a collection of individuals who collaborate in work and defense. Although Bion's terminology helps us talk about group level phenomena, his theories provide little insight into the formation and development of small groups and their relation to larger organizations.

Family Systems Theory. No discussion of theories of group functioning could be complete without acknowledging the important contributions of family systems theory (Hoffman, 1981). Emerging from a tradition that was explicitly not psychoanalytic, family systems therapies make use of principles of communication theory that emphasize human groups as information processing systems. Despite their acknowledgement of the contributions of von Bertalanffy's general systems theory, the family therapists were most deeply influenced by Gregory Bateson, who as an anthropologist, was most sensitive to the social construction of reality and the relativity of epistemology (Bateson & Reusch, 1951; Bateson, 1972, 1979).

Like psychoanalysis, family systems therapy today is no longer unified by allegiance to a single theoretician. And also like psychoanalysis, there is a worldwide network of practitioners

united as much by common principles of practice as by theoretical considerations. These shared principles include the use of family mapping, or genograms, to portray the interconnected family system (Guerin & Pendagast, 1976), the use of a developmental theory of the family (Carter & McGoldrick, 1989), and a variety of techniques to re-align family communications and interactions (Minuchin & Fishman, 1981).

What family systems theory offers is a theoretical starting point at an interpersonal level (assuming that communication implies interpersonal interaction). The implicit reductionism of psychoanalytically derived theories is avoided by starting with interpersonal communications and the social phenomena that arise because of them. Levenson (1972) feels that such a communication paradigm was among Sullivan's original strengths until he fell back on an energetic/drive model.

Critics of family systems theory feel that the field's reliance on early systems theorists tends to lead them to treat the family more like a servomechanism than as an organic system comprised of individuals (Pam, 1993). Organizational consultants have also challenged the uncritical appropriation of family therapy techniques and theory into work at the organizational level, pointing out that techniques developed to work with families don't always generalize to larger, more complex, and task-determined work groups (Borwick, 1986).

Consulting to Organizational Systems: The Art of Working Between Levels

BY THEIR VERY nature, all corporate communities contain a multitude of systems. Subsidiaries, divisions, and product groups are examples of subsystems. Each of these subsystems contains working groups, each of which may contain a few to many individuals. The task of the consultant using a Biodynamic approach is to identify the proper level of system intervention (the Emergent Principle), to delineate the system in question (the Integral Principle), and to begin to understand how the system is structured in terms of role clarity and authority (Differentiation and Hierarchicalization). Essential to an initial diagnosis is an appreciation of the system's history (the Developmental Principle) and its ability to thrive in current organizational and economic environments (the Autopoietic Principle). The recognition of the potential opportunities for a given system to transform, and the consultant's ability to facilitate this process, is the most significant challenge to the organizational consultant (the Synthetic

Principle). These tasks are isomorphic with, or at least have parallels to, those of the Interpersonal psychoanalyst as indicated by Levenson (1991, see above).

The consultant cannot stay fixated at one level of systems organization. Like the honeybee flying from flower to flower to hive and back, the informed consultant must be able to shuttle among levels of organization, from team dynamics to corporate politics to individual psychology and back to the team. The knowledge of the dynamics at both the individual and corporate levels must be integrated into the work at the team level. There are no simple or straightforward rules for this integration, only the general guidelines of a dynamic systems theory.

The art of the consultant lies in the ability to work between levels. The micro-economist may have a better grasp on the economic theory of the corporation and the psychoanalyst may have a better understanding of individual psychodynamics, but the competent consultant should feel at ease in both worlds. The DST consultant is a facilitator who functions within and between levels.

Selves into group members. When consulting is done at the level of the small group or team, the task is to facilitate formation and functioning of the work group. The delineation of role or roles is essential. Interpersonal theory (Sullivan, 1953) provides a basis for understanding individual functioning, the characterological distortions and security operations of the self-system as it functions in its interpersonal environment. These considerations must be incorporated into group-level constructs that emphasize “role” and “group-as-a-whole” concepts (Agazarian, 1982, 1992).

Groups into organizations. The organization is a system of work groups held together by coordinated goals and a common organizational infrastructure (e.g., HR, MIS, Finance, Board of Directors, etc.). At this level, the consultant facilitates boundary making that reinforces small group identity while allowing for transformation as a result of new information from subsystems and other parts of the larger system. Intergroup theory and the principles of embedded-intergroup relations are particularly relevant at this level of intervention (Alderfer, 1977, 1986).

The systems consultant has a unique relationship with the system being consulted. Both consultant and organizational system function independently outside of the consultative relationship, yet it is within the relationship that the work of

consultation is done. Psychoanalysts have long recognized both the opportunities and risks of such participant-observation. True objectivism is necessarily compromised but additional insights become possible. Krantz and Gilmore (1991) have discussed this phenomenon as it pertains to organizational consultants.

The consultant stands “meta” to the system, that is, somewhat — but not entirely — on the periphery. This stance provides flexibility and increased opportunity to facilitate change (Wynne, McDaniel, Weber, 1986). Yet the consultant, either individually or as part of a consulting group, is a system unto him- or herself. The interactions among consulting systems and organizational systems introduces many additional layers of complexity and is probably worthy of a chapter in itself.

Summary: Dynamic Systems from Individuals to Organizations and Beyond

THIS CHAPTER, LIKE those preceding it, is an attempt to bridge a theoretical chasm between individual psychology (primarily psychoanalytic theory, since I continue to believe it is the most sophisticated understanding of personality there is) and organizational theory and economics. The danger inherent in such an ambitious enterprise is that, by trying to explain too much, it may explain nothing well. The need for a Biodynamic approach grounded in Dynamic Systems Theory, however, arose because of these theoretical discontinuities. If the connecting framework that DST purports to be falls short, the need for such a framework nevertheless continues to exist.

As I have suggested, General Systems Theory seems to have failed somewhat in its goal to make over science in a new image. Is Dynamic Systems Theory simply old wine in a new bottle? Although still a type of systems theory, DST is unique in both the clarity of its axioms and the systems principles that it elaborates.

Although the Emergent Principle may be implicit in some statements of General Systems Theory, it is not a part of that theory per se. The explicit use of the philosophy of emergentism in DST and the model of the nested universe provide a unique starting point for the theory. The Synthetic Principle, incorporating as it does the advances of Chaos Theory (Gleick, 1987) and Complexity (Waldrop, 1992), provides for the recursive evolution of systems and their fundamental unpredictability. Both the first and last axioms of DST incorporate new advances in evolutionary biology and particle physics, respectively, helping to ensure its relevance at all the different levels that the theory

attempts to address. The wine in the DST bottle may taste like an old vintage but it is distinctly different.

It was Harry Stack Sullivan who first resisted the reification of the self, offering instead the term “self-system.” I suggested that Sullivan was in fact a “proto-systems” theorist, because he recognized in the self a constellation of identifications and relational fragments that were best described as a dynamic system. The self-as-system is not only consistent with DST it is virtually dictated by the theory. Interpersonal psychoanalysis, as it moves from self-as-system to interpersonal systems, begs for theoretical constructs that can accommodate larger and larger groups of people. Bionian group theory is consistent with this need, but only advances us one level. It is only when we incorporate DST that the many levels, from self to interpersonal to group and family to organizational and beyond, can be adequately accommodated. The preceding chapters have attempted only to lay a persuasive groundwork that DST can accommodate every level of analysis, from individuals to the largest social endeavors. The theory, however, is not a Procrustean bed that insists everything fits neatly into place. It is a tool, but only one, by which to understand a huge and fascinatingly complex world of people interacting in complex ways.

The preceding chapters have been our time together in the laboratory. We have explored the science and the theories behind them. It has been a protracted, but hopefully not wasted, effort to understand how those who have come before have dealt with these problems. Now it is time to take a field trip. This is where the world gets interesting, where we encounter real life, where we come face-to-face with the inadequacy of theory in the productive and exciting world of business today.

Endnotes

¹Of course, other schools of psychiatry and psychology exist, but none has developed such an integrated body of theory and practice, except perhaps cognitive-behaviorism, in psychology, and the medical model, in psychiatry. Considerations of focus and space prevent these models from being fully considered in the present context.

²The historian Henri Ellenberger (1970) has traced a multitude of meanings of the term “dynamic” in psychiatry. Although none of these usages contradicts the sense which I want to convey, perhaps it is the usage of Hughlings Jackson which comes closest to Freud’s notion of mental dynamisms (Sirkin & Fleming, 1982, p.239) and the concept of “dynamism” that Sullivan also means to convey (Sullivan, 1953, p.102-103).

With his Social Field Theory, Kurt Lewin (1951) hoped to do for psychology what Einstein had done for physics. His field theory, named after Einstein's, pertained to social fields. His goal was to establish a basic framework from which to understand human behavior. Originally, Lewin was a member of the Gestalt school of psychology, which emphasized the synthetic functions of mind. His psychological field theory used Gestalt principles, which dealt primarily with perception, but stressed social relations and interactions, i.e., the social field. Lewin's famous formula, $B = f(P, E)$, behavior is a function of person and environment, was the cornerstone of his social psychology. Lewin believed that one's perception of the social environment, with its incipient rewards and punishments, determined behavior. The social field was the primary determinant of personality and behavior. Lewin's theories and research had wide ranging effects, especially following his immigration to the United States and his establishment of group research laboratories at M.I.T. Under Lewin's influence, his student's went on to found the National Training Laboratories which spawned the T-group and encounter group movements. Although later adapted for psychotherapeutic ends (Leiberman, Yalom, Miles, 1973), these groups were originally research oriented, following Lewin's dictum "No research without action, no action without research." Lewin's tradition of action research can also be found, alive and well, among organizational consultants (Argyris & Schon, 1978).

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