

CT, PCT, RT, PCT again, MOL, and IAACT

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Alphabet soup seems to be on the menu today, so I will explain in this paper what each of the acronyms above means. I will go through this in a fairly leisurely way, so be patient and we can hope that you or I or perhaps both may learn something.

CT: Control Theory

“Control theory,” contrary to some impressions left by William Glasser and others, is not a theory about human beings or other organisms. It’s a theory that explains how a whole class of physical systems works. The behavior of any system that belongs to this class can be explained by control theory, whether it’s a home thermostat, a guidance system for an airplane or a rocket ship, or a person engaged in some control activity.

So what is there to explain about how control systems behave? The basic problem is how to understand a system in which causation runs in a closed loop. Consider the cruise control in a car. Obviously, this controller produces an action that affects the car’s speed. In effect, it presses down on the accelerator pedal to go faster, and lets up to go slower, just as the driver would do.

But what makes it do those things? Just as obviously, this controller has to be told how fast the car is going at any moment, and it must also be told what speed is the right speed, the speed the driver wants. It gets its information about the car’s speed from a sensor mounted on the car’s drive shaft, and it is told by the driver what speed to seek, the driver pressing a button that tells the controller to remember the specific speed at the time of the press.

The controller is affecting the car’s speed at the same time that the car’s speed, relative to the desired speed, is affecting the controller. We have a chicken

making an egg at the same time that the egg is making the same chicken. So what will happen when, say, the car encounters a hill, or the driver changes the desired speed? You can try to reason this out with words if you want to waste an afternoon, or half of your life, but the only way to predict *correctly* what will happen is to use control theory.

Using control theory, we would represent the effect of the car’s speed on the controller’s action by using one equation, and the effect of the action on the car’s speed by using a second equation. Solving these equations simultaneously (since both relationships have to remain true at the same time), we can find out how the car’s speed and the accelerator pressure will *both* change as the car encounters disturbances like hills or tailwinds, and as the driver varies the desired speed. Even approximate and simple equations will allow us to predict the car’s behavior with surprising accuracy, the errors being only a few percent.

The next time you want to say you are using “control theory,” therefore, you would do well to reflect on exactly what you mean. Control theory, which began to take form in the 19th Century and turned into an engineering discipline in the late 1930s, is a mathematical approach to a type of system in which cause and effect are bent around into a circle, so ordinary concepts of causation fail to work correctly. If that is what you mean by control theory, by all means say so. But if it’s not, read on.

PCT: Perceptual Control Theory

In 1953 I began working with R. K. Clark and R. L. MacFarland to try to apply some of Norbert Wiener’s ideas to human behavior. At that time, all we knew was that feedback was an important concept, and that something called control theory had something to do with it. During the next 7 years, we three de-

veloped the essential architecture of a hierarchy of control systems that worked strikingly well to explain most kinds of human and animal behavior. As the engineer in the group, I set out to study control theory, and soon found that it antedated Norbert Wiener by at least a decade. But Wiener, and even more so his colleague Rosenblueth, had put their fingers on concepts that we saw with increasing excitement could completely replace most of the ideas of behavior that life scientists had believed in before that time.

In the last few years of this collaboration we communicated with many life scientists, trying to introduce these new ideas. Although we gave a number of seminars, and then in 1960 published two papers in the scientific literature, the overall result was crushingly disappointing. Where there was not downright disbelief that any real systems could behave as control systems do, there was a complete failure by most scientists to grasp the significance of this new paradigm. We had shown that there was a scientific basis for ideas such as intention, desire, and purpose, and we had shown how to demonstrate experimentally the way these concepts worked. But by and large, the scientific community either couldn't grasp what we were saying or didn't want to know. Our little group split up and we went our separate ways.

Readers familiar with my first book, *Behavior: the control of perception*, may realize that it was published just 20 years after the Powers-Clark-MacFarland group formed, and 13 years after it broke up. While I did publish one paper during that 13-year stretch, the main thing I was doing, aside from earning a living for my deserving and long-suffering family, was preparing to write a book. This involved studying neurology, reading a good deal of literature in the behavioral sciences and physiology, and working out more of the details of "feedback theory" as I called it then. By 1972 I had the manuscript of B:CP and tried it out in a 13-week student-sponsored seminar under the guidance of Don Campbell and Hugh Petrie, at Northwestern University. The book was accepted by Aldine Press, and published in 1973. It was, of course, ignored—but not as thoroughly as the first published effort.

It took me another ten years to realize what the problem was. It was simply that the changes of thinking required by control theory were too radical,

and the life science community was perfectly aware of just how radical they were. In modern parlance, most life scientists said, "Let's not go there." And they didn't.

However, people kept joining the movement, and inquiries kept coming in. One of them came in about 1979 from a Dr. William Glasser, who had written a book called *Reality Therapy*, and who wanted to incorporate control theory into his ideas. We step aside for a moment now to consider Glasser's first contact with control theory.

RT: Reality Therapy

Reality Therapy is a collection of practical ideas about how to help people in trouble and prevent trouble from arising in the first place. As taught by Glasser to practitioners in his rather large organization, it consists of a series of set procedures involving questions and challenges. For example, a person in trouble might be asked, "Is what you're doing getting you what you want?" and "Would you be willing to make a plan for doing something differently, and committing to it?" As demonstrated by Glasser and confederates in role-plays, it involves (in my opinion, from having observed quite a few such demonstrations) a rather bullying attitude toward the client. But it must be more useful than what people had done before, because a great many people have used this approach and have sworn to its effectiveness.

It's not my intention to criticize Reality Therapy, but only to point out that the relationship of CT to RT was tenuous at best. Glasser's humanitarian ideals called for minimizing the tendency to treat people as stimulus-response mechanisms, and he thought that control theory provided a scientific basis for his approach. While one can hardly complain about seeing one's work used for good ends, Reality Therapy was really not very consistent with control theory. It seemed to be based on the idea that if a person could be persuaded or even forced to show behavior typical of some beneficial state of mind, that state of mind would soon follow even if it didn't initially exist. This was a very old-fashioned view, probably due to Glasser's mentor Harrington. But aside from that, it was a view that was of no theoretical interest: either this approach worked or it didn't, and things that work sometimes but not other times are not of much interest to the theoretician unless you can say *why* they worked or didn't work in each case.

As I said, this approach had widespread appeal, perhaps because the methods are simple and understandable and reasonably effective, but also perhaps because they replaced other methods that were much worse for the clients.

Glasser eventually stopped using the idea of control theory, and replaced it by something he called Choice Theory. His idea of control theory was primarily the proposal that people control rather than react; his idea of Choice Theory seems to be the proposal that people choose rather than react. What he meant by “control” was certainly not clear, since he repudiated the idea that perception had anything to do with it, and what he now meant by “choice” was equally unclear. But the move to Choice Theory took place nearly two decades after the first brush with control theory, and there are some points about control theory we need to make before picking up that thread again.

PCT again

In 1985 the Control Systems Group was formed at the urging of Dick Robertson. Even before that first meeting, a group of people interested in control theory had been attending annual meetings of the American Society for Cybernetics, where you would think the reception would be enthusiastic, though it wasn't. Even before the CSG had formed, the emphasis of my efforts had shifted from research to persuasion. I began thinking up demonstrations of the principles of control theory that showed how they applied to human behavior, simply to show people that there was something there to be studied.

The main points to be made were these:

1. To control something means to act on it in such a way as to bring it to a desired state and keep it there despite other forces tending to disturb it. When you control the path of a car going along a road, you act on it by using the steering wheel, and your actions bring it to the position on the road where you want it (in your lane), and keep it there despite bumps, curves, and crosswinds. Of course you're controlling other things, too—we don't control just one thing at a time.
2. Because other forces and influences are always acting, there is no way to predict exactly what action will be needed to control something. If there is a crosswind blowing you will find yourself holding the steering wheel cocked to one side even though the car continues to move straight down the road.
3. In order to control something, it is absolutely necessary to perceive it, at least once in a while. You may get to see the effects of your actions only at intervals, as when you're shooting arrows at a target or sending bowling balls down the lane, but if you never get to see the result there's no way you can compensate for disturbances. For fine control, as in threading a needle or even just standing upright, you really need to see, feel, or otherwise know what is going on continuously.
4. How do we know what is going on in the world right now? Through our senses, and in no other way. Our senses, and further neural equipment that builds abstract perceptions out of simple ones, provide us with a world to experience, and it is only that *experienced* world that we can control. Of course the experienced world, we assume, is derived from something real outside of us, so when we act to control the perceived world, we are necessarily doing something to the real world Out There. When we do that, we affect the senses of other people, and if they perceive in pretty much the same way we do, they will see us controlling things in their perceptual worlds, too. So even though none of us knows exactly what is happening to the actual reality outside of us, with its quarks and gluons and so on, we can reach agreement about some of the experiences we're having, and even figure out, in terms of our own private realities, what other people are controlling.

I should mention that this rather obvious point is one that really annoyed some behavioral and biological scientists who liked to pass themselves off as trained observers who could provide reports on what actually happens rather than just their personal interpretations. In fact it annoyed lots of people who claimed that their insights into human nature were better than anyone else's. I can remember a time when this idea annoyed me, too, but I got over it.

5. The conclusion: human beings and other animals produce behavior for one reason and one reason only: to control their experiences of the world. Behavior affects the world that really exists; those effects, after being filtered through the properties of human perception, show up as changes in the world we know about In Here (the world that looks to us as if it's Out There, as well as the one we feel is really In Here). So it shouldn't surprise

you if a first impression of what someone is doing—what someone is controlling—turns out to be wrong, or if other people watching your behavior don't see immediately what you're trying to accomplish. You can see another person's actions and their effects on the environment as it appears to you, but you can't see the perceptions being influenced by those actions and that environment. You're in the wrong brain for that.

6. I hasten to add that the situation is not hopeless. You can go a long way toward figuring out what another person is controlling if you are willing to do some careful observing and some experimenting. When people control something, they defend it against disturbances. If you apply small and carefully-chosen disturbances to aspects of the world that someone else might be controlling, you can, if you've guessed right, expect to see or feel the other person pushing back, keeping the disturbance from affecting the controlled perception. If you want to know where a housewife wants a potted plant to be, try moving it a little. If she doesn't care much where it is, she'll leave it where you put it. Otherwise, the next time she looks at it she'll move it back where it was.

This may not tell you *exactly* what the other person is controlling, but it will at least get you close, and if you can avoid altering the thing you think is being controlled, you'll probably avoid conflict with the other person, if you don't want to be in conflict.

7. One further aside: "controlling perception" means controlling the state of some specific perception, not changing one perception into a different kind of perception. When I control the perception of the distance of a glass of water from my mouth, I am controlling a perception of distance, not changing the perception of distance into a perception of nearness. I am making a large distance into a smaller distance, but it's still a distance no matter what I call it. The other kind of change—near to far, half-empty to half-full, is a higher-level sort of control that doesn't require any action on the real world Out There. Seeing a glass as half-full instead of half-empty doesn't alter the amount of water in the glass. It just changes your attitude toward the glass of water, which is OK but a different sort of control, involving imagination.

8. We have to drop back to the second point for a moment: the statement that there is no way to predict the actions that will be necessary to control a given variable. This is obvious when you think of driving a car—you wouldn't want to ride in a car if the driver had already figured out how he was going to move the steering wheel. What you want is a driver who will turn the wheel *in any way required to keep the car on the road and out of trouble*. You want a driver who will turn the wheel to counteract the effects of crosswinds and bumps, to avoid other cars, and so on. The point of control is to be able to counteract *unpredictable* influences and happenings that interfere with control. That is what control systems are good at, and that no other kind of behaving system can do. That is why organisms are control systems and not some other kind of system that can survive only if it can predict every last thing that is going to happen to it.

We could dwell on the details of control theory for a lot longer, but it is time to be moving on.

In 1990, CSGnet was started on the internet, and shortly after that, Kent McClelland suggested that we in the CSG call what we do "Perceptual Control Theory" to distinguish it from engineering control theory and to remind us of the basic principle, control of perception rather than Reality. So at last, PCT comes into the story. Let us now consider what can be done with PCT.

MOL: The method of levels.

One aspect of PCT that we haven't talked about is the way control systems can be arranged into hierarchies. This idea leads to HPCT: hierarchical PCT. Some control systems act not by producing effects on the outside world directly, but by telling other control systems to produce effects at a more detailed level. It is up to those control systems, then, to act in such a way as to produce the detailed effects they are asked for, thus affecting the higher system's perceptions in the way it wants. Many levels, obviously, could be arranged this way.

One of the great advantages of a hierarchical organization is that we avoid duplication of functions. Consider the control systems that position and move the limbs. These are the spinal reflexes. They are always present during normal actions. One burning question that physiologists somehow forgot to

ask was what keeps these reflexes from acting when the brain, way up there on the far end of the spinal cord, wants to use the limbs for some purpose such as eating lunch. Rodney Brooks, now an exalted head of a department at MIT, came up with the brilliant idea that (in effect) when higher systems want to use the muscles for their own purposes, they simply turn off all other systems that might want to use the same muscles and the limbs they operate. So every higher system has to provide its own means of using muscles to control limbs. I say “brilliant” sarcastically, because that is actually sort of a dumb idea for a really smart MIT professor to believe in, when there is a much simpler idea that would work much better and avoid having a hundred muscle-controllers that all did the same thing.

The simpler idea is that the higher systems *use* the existing control systems at the spinal level. This can be done by adjusting their reference levels—reference levels define the state they want their perceptions to be in. For spinal reflexes, the perceptions in question represent muscle force, muscle length, and rate of change of muscle length. Tell these systems how much muscle force you want, for example, and they will give it to you in something like 1/50 of a second—far faster than you (a system higher up in the brain) could do it yourself if you had direct access to the muscles. Once you have such a control system for each muscle (as we do), that same system can be used for any higher-order purpose, without any duplication of function.

We experience this hierarchical organization quite directly. Consider the following question-and-answer session:

- Q: Why did you move your hand?
 A: To pick up this knife.
 Q: Why did you pick up that knife?
 A: In order to cut my steak.
 Q: Why cut your steak?
 A: In order to fit a piece into my mouth.
 Q: Why put a piece of it into your mouth?
 A: Because it's not polite to stuff the whole thing in.
 Q: Why be polite?
 A: So I'll be asked to dinner again some time.
 Q: Why get asked to dinner again?
 A: Because I want to save money, and food is expensive.
 Q: Why save money?
 Etc.

So, as far as we followed, this person moved his or her hand as a means of saving money. Of course the same actions, at each level, also served many other goals we didn't ask about, among them being the goal of not being hungry. But clearly, each goal was only a subgoal, a perception to be controlled not just for its own sake, but as part of a larger control process. There are other paths through this complex hierarchy: why not be hungry? Because it distracts me from trying to write my novel. Why write your novel? And so on.

It must be evident immediately that the brain is not just a simple control system. It's a huge hierarchy of control systems, with many levels and many systems at each level, all these systems operating at the same time. In principle, we could apply small well-calibrated disturbances to different aspects of a person's environment and body, and set up tens of thousands of equations with tens of thousands of unknowns, and use a supercomputer to figure out just which variables at each level were being controlled in which states at a given moment. In principle. Actually, nobody can do that, and nobody will be able to do it for perhaps a thousand years.

This is too bad, because this system is so huge and complicated that people who own such systems often find that the machinery isn't working right and they don't know how to fix it. There are natural mechanisms for resolving problems like internal conflicts, but they work slowly and don't always work, so people have what we call “psychological” problems even in perfectly healthy brains and bodies.

People have invented endless varieties of therapies for helping other people who get into organizational trouble, involving everything from sitting in boxes made of special woods to plugging the brain into a wall socket for a few calamitous seconds. All these methods work some of the time: that is, after having had such methods applied to them, some people say they feel better, and actually seem to function better. The people who apply these methods are very pleased when someone seems to benefit from them, and they generally forget immediately about those who weren't helped, or who were harmed.

We would all really like to have some way to help people that actually works, and when it doesn't work, at least does no harm. I think there is at least a start on developing such a way, in what I call the Method of Levels. Some of you are familiar with this method, but it never hurts to review what you know.

The MOL depends on a couple of phenomena. One is the phenomenon of mobile awareness. We can attend to the words on this page at one moment, and the fact that the lighting on the page is too bright or too dim at the next moment. Awareness flits all over the place, dwelling on one aspect of experience and then another, up, down, and sideways.

It seems clear that experience itself, by which I mean all of the brain activities that represent things going on in the world and in our heads, does not flit around like this. The brain goes on working as it always works, perceptions vary, control systems control, and so on. What changes is only our conscious acquaintance with these activities, as if we were shining a small flashlight around in a huge room full of running machinery. When you become aware that you're balancing upright in a chair (assuming you're not lying in it limply), you don't sit much differently, if any. And more to the point, when your attention goes back to reading and understanding what is before your eyes, you don't slide to the floor like a piece of Jell-O. All those control systems are still working, which means they are still controlling representations of things like posture, which means that *the perceptions of the things being controlled are still present even if not conscious*. The neural signals are present, even if they aren't reaching consciousness (wherever that is—don't ask me).

This adds up to the second main phenomenon: we experience consciously only a small part of the totality of brain activity going on at any moment, although (the first phenomenon) it is a changeable part.

If you happen to be conscious of some control process in the middle of the hierarchy, neither at the lowest level nor at the highest, you will be aware of things happening at some modest level of abstraction, and of your own actions, and of what you want to be happening. *How* you're doing these things is not normally conscious—that is, you may be talking, but you won't be conscious of forming each phoneme or of how your lips and tongue move. And *why* you're doing those things is also not generally conscious. At the moment that you're explaining to the police officer why your attention was distracted from the red light you just drove through, you're only partly conscious of the background thought of being late to work that made you decide to ignore the red light.,

Specifically, we are often in a state where we are aware of a main, foreground, process, but at the same time we are somewhat, marginally, fleetingly, aware of a background process that seems to be *about* the foreground process. I always hate it when ideas are presented so abstractly right at the beginning, so let's try that again.

Suppose you have a hobby—collecting broken drill-bits, for example (to avoid offending somebody, one really has to reach far to think of something that people *don't* collect). You're in the middle of explaining to someone just how you tell a collectable drill-bit from a piece of junk—say, by the symmetry of fracture planes at the break. Then, right in the middle of your enthusiastic explanation, you find yourself saying, “Am I boring you? Maybe you're not interested in broken drill bits.”

At that moment, you become conscious of things you had probably been perceiving all along, but hadn't paid proper attention to. You've noticed the other person fidgeting, looking at his wristwatch, clearing his throat to try to get a word in edgewise, and otherwise telling you he wants the conversation to end. Some part of you knew that you were holding this person captive, and it was deliberately doing things to prevent the other person from leaving or even breaking into the flow of words. Your consciousness was so engrossed in the fascinating subject-matter that you weren't conscious of these other things going on in the background of your mind.

But for some reason, a moment came when the background activities leaked into the foreground and you became aware of them, and even made a comment about them. You had probably perceived the other fidgeting and looking at his watch, just as physical activities, but now suddenly you are aware of a higher level perception drawn from these simple factual observations: the perception of what they *mean*. It often happens at that point that you can see what you're doing at the background level, and just seeing it consciously is enough to set off a change. You acknowledge some of the signals you've been getting—“Gosh, have I really been talking for half an hour? Maybe we should go to lunch ...”

If the listener had done something to call attention to his signals—for example, tapping his wristwatch ostentatiously—you might have made the up-a-level move much sooner. All things considered (when you're considering them), you really don't want to be a bore. A simple indication that

the other person isn't totally captivated could well be enough to jog the monologist into realizing his miscalculation, and that could easily be enough to cause a change, without the point being made in any more aggressive way.

The Method of Levels works something like tapping your wristwatch. It's a non-aggressive, non-coercive, non-bullying way of helping another person to unravel some of the complexities of his own hierarchical structure of control processes—if he or she has asked for help. The helper—the word “guide” seems popular—listens to the other person talking about some subject (usually a problem of some sort, but not necessarily). The idea is to recognize that a background thought *about* the subject has just been expressed, and to indicate it, gently, in case the other person might find it significant. The agreement with the other person is that when such an indication is made, the person will at least pause for a moment and explore the background thought, idea, attitude, or whatever it is long enough to see if it's of any importance. We can refer to the “other person” as the “explorer,” the only one who can look to see what is actually going on in that brain. So until further notice, it's “guide” and “explorer,” if you like.

When you're learning how to be the guide in the method of levels, as many of you will remember from last year's meeting, the most urgent question is “But what am I supposed to DO?” Tapping your wristwatch just doesn't seem like enough. In fact I don't know if it is enough. The main reason for teaching this method to other people in a position to use it and asking them to try it out is to find out if it is really as effective as I think it is. But in my limited experience with the MOL, it is really surprisingly effective, just as effective as any kind of therapy I've experienced in the chair or on the couch. In fact I suspect that the effectiveness of any kind of talking therapy depends exactly on how well it encapsulates the Method of Levels—anything else that goes on is either just window-dressing or a handicap, like all the stuff the witch-doctor puts in his malaria medicine beside the bark of that special tree, and all the dancing around and mumbling he does. The Method of Levels, I think, is the essential ingredient of any successful psychotherapy.

I digress. It's not hard to understand why the guide might feel the need to do something more than call attention to background thoughts. But this urge, I believe, is precisely what should *not* be

heeded. The guide may guess what is going on in the explorer's head, but the explorer *knows* what is going on, or at least what is observable at the moment in his or her own experience. The point of therapy is not to show how clever, insightful, empathetic, or understanding the guide is. If the guide needs to have those characteristics acknowledged or shown off, then perhaps the guide should be the explorer for a while. The MOL is a minimalist therapy, doing only what is needed to help a person recognize a problem and find a point of view from which something can be done about it.

It's possible, of course, that what a person in trouble needs is not the MOL, but some other kind of help. But that kind of help is not what we typically think of as psychotherapy—it's more like education, or medical treatment, or supplying missing resources. The person who acts as guide in MOL sessions may or may not feel qualified to handle those other kinds of needs. The MOL is for people who are lost in the complexity of their own lives, who are in conflict, who are out of touch with their own motivations. That's a lot of us, of course, and it includes large bunches of perfectly normal human beings. It's quite normal, I think, to be a little nuts. I know that I've grown quite used to it. Being a little nuts, I mean.

The MOL is best taught by demonstration and practice, so I'll stop trying to do it all with words.

IAACT: The International Association for Applied Control Theory

The best thing William Glasser has done for progress lately has been to treat many of his followers so shabbily that they broke away from him and formed IAACT. Of course it was also fortunate, from my point of view, that the founders of this new group were already more than slightly aware of PCT. They, like many other Reality Therapists, had read both Glasser's *Stations of the Mind* and my introduction to it, and had wanted to find out more about control theory than they had learned from the main part of the book. Reality Therapists were strongly represented in the CSG—Ed Ford, who had been a faculty member in Glasser's organization, was a founding member of the CSG and was part of meetings on control theory even before the first CSG meeting. Perry and Fred Good attended many early CSG meetings, as did Diane Gossen and Brent Dennis.

Clearly, there is something in Glasser's teachings that strikes a chord with the same people who find control theory useful. An important common thread seems to be the idea that people govern their own lives rather than just responding to environmental stimuli. This concept encourages us to show respect for others, recognizing that they have their own aspirations and goals and generally find their own ways of getting what they need or want., just as we do. Another important common idea that arises from the first one is that it is not helpful to try to control other people; the result of too ham-handed an approach is more likely to be opposition and downright conflict than benefit. So followers of both RT and PCT tend to give others room to do as they please, to put critiques in the form of questions rather than criticisms, and to rely on the client more than the therapist to come up with specific answers to problems.

I want to point out, however, that not everything Glasser has taught is necessarily consistent with PCT. I need to point this out, in fact, because the people who formed IAACT were formerly competent Reality Therapists who had internalized Glasser's ways of seeing things long before they encountered control theory or PCT. On the one hand, this made them into competent therapists and counselors, but on the other hand it loaded them with some baggage that I think would be better turned in to the thrift store. One of the unneeded pieces of luggage is the four or five "basic needs" that Glasser defined and promoted. This isn't to say that people don't need love, belonging, power, and all the rest. Some of those needs are important to many people, and even if they're not all important to any one person, you can always classify what the person *does* need so it seems to belong to one of the basic needs. For instance, I need to spend a certain amount of my time alone with my telescope, exploring the night sky. This isn't obviously one of the standard needs, but you might say that it increases my knowledge and so gives me power, and that it creates a bond with other amateur astronomers and so give me belonging, and so forth. You can't miss with this kind of classification scheme, but that very fact argues against its importance.

In HPCT, there are levels of organization, and levels of goals, and there is some highest level of goals

that I speak of loosely as system concepts. But there is no reason to propose that every person ends up organized in exactly the same way at the highest level; in fact, when we consider how and why learning happens, it's highly unlikely that people will all have just one small set of most-important goals. If we want to take even a semi-scientific approach to exploring human nature, we must be more open-minded, and wait for the evidence about actual high-level control processes to come in before we even think of trying to pick out universal characteristics. What's really universal about human beings is that they are control systems. What they happen to have learned to control for is far from universal.

Another thing about Glasser's beliefs to be cautious about is the way he tends to blame the victim and simply demand that a person with problems straighten up and fly right. Is what you're doing getting you what you want, Stupid? Are you willing to make a plan to change even some tiny part of your self-destructive behavior, or are you content to sit around complaining and whining? Any idiot can spend five minutes telling his wife one little thing he likes about her, so why can't you, Dummy?

I know, of course, that such things are not said in a nasty way, but behind them is a pretty nasty concept of human problems. When Glasser says that a depressed person is deliberately "depressing," the impression he gives is that if this person would just start acting cheerful, the depression would go away. The only remedy he knows for such conditions is to get the person to behave differently, in the (very old-fashioned) belief that inner feelings simply follow from the outward show. He recognizes the existence of conflict between people, but his conclusions about internal conflict seem to be that nothing can be done about it.

The problem with telling people that they are depressing, or angering, or low-self-esteeming and so on, is that even if the client believes this, the client doesn't feel himself or herself deliberately wanting to be that way, or doing anything that is causing those feelings. It's more or less the authority of the counselor that makes anyone believe such statements—that, and in many people the willingness to believe the worst about themselves, including the possibility that they're choosing to be the way they are. So we nicely add a load of guilt to the depression.

Undoubtedly, many problems like depression and anger are caused by things a person is doing internally. But it's just too simple-minded to say that these symptoms are generated *directly and deliberately*. It is much more likely, for instance, that a feeling of unremitting anger results from a combination of goals, such as the goal of beating someone up and the goal of making that same person love you. PCT provides for a rather nice theory of emotions, even if it doesn't cover absolutely everything. When anger is seen in this way, and tracked down to specific goals, there is suddenly a chance of actually changing the goals and doing away with the anger at its source, rather than trying to overcome it by forcing yourself to be nice. The MOL shows us how people can be helped to find a point of view at a higher level from which such changes of goal are much easier to make. The will-power solution that Glasser offers is far from the only possible one.

A good many of the more theoretical aspects of Glasser's approach are simple-minded in this way. They need to be re-thought in the light of PCT, if IAACT people are not to be in the strange position of defending the teachings of a guru whom they have repudiated.

I don't mean to try to revise Reality Therapy in one fell swoop—that's really a job for IAACT members. I am trying to alert the relevant people to some places where deeper consideration is needed, and to indicate how PCT can provide unexpected alternatives. It is important, if PCT is to contribute as much as possible to IAACT, to take a dispassionate attitude toward all the teachings of RT that have been carried over from the days of Glasser, and to examine them in the light of PCT, one by one, to see if they are still useful or convincing.

One last remark. "Repudiate" is too strong a word for what IAACT needs to do about Glasser. Basically, IAACT will be doing what Glasser himself once hoped to do with PCT: improving, revising, and extending what was once called Reality Therapy. It would be self-defeating to throw away all the good that Bill Glasser has done, just because he made some mistakes. If Bill Glasser wanted to join the CSG tomorrow, as far as I am concerned he would be welcome. That's the only way to run a world, isn't it?

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