Thread on responsibility

Unedited posts from archives of CSG-L (see INTROCSG.NET):

Date: Fri Feb 03, 1995 8:00 pm PST
Subject: Re: responsibility

[From Bill Powers (950203.1450 MST)]

Joel Judd (950203)--

> Sure, I'm responsible for knocking over the glass of juice when I went to
> answer the phone, but THAT consequence wasn't intended. There's always a
> reason when someone is murdered, but nevertheless someone did it.

I think Rick set the condition that we must be intentionally controlling a
consequence if we're to be said to be responsible for it. An unintended side-
effect of reaching for the phone may be to knock over the juice glass, but that
is an accident, not a purposive act. There was no reference level for a
knocked-over juice glass. A person is considered a murderer only when the
intent of the person was to kill someone. Accidentally causing a death may open
one to a charge of negligent homicide, but only because others deem certain
precautions to be reasonably expected. Causing a death purely by accident is
not usually considered murder in any degree.

>   ... we are responsible for the behavior with which we control perceptions.

I would suggest that we are responsible only for the intended perceptions, and
their external counterparts. The means by which we control perceptions depend
on the state of the environment. If an environmental disturbance appears, our
control systems will automatically change their outputs to oppose the
disturbance, and that change may have unwanted side-effects considerably before
we could consciously refrain from opposing the disturbance (even if we wanted
to).

The main problem here is the difference between _being_ responsible and _being
held_ responsible. I can hold you responsible for anything I please, reasonable
or unreasonable. That doesn't make you in fact responsible. A terrorist may say
that if his comrades are not released from prison, the terrorist will set off a
bomb in an airplane. And then he may say "So the consequences are up to you: if
you don't release the prisoners, you will be responsible for the deaths of a
planeload of innocent people." This in no way changes the fact that if the
people die, it will be the terrorist who caused them, intentionally, to die.
Simply holding someone responsible doesn't make that person automatically
responsible for any effect in the world. We are responsible only for those
effects we control. No other reading of the word makes sense.

I had some doubts about Ed Ford's use of the term responsibility for just this
reason. A school administrator may set up a rule that a certain kind of
behavior is forbidden, and that infractions are to be followed by certain
consequences for the student. So far, so good: rules are needed. But when a
student does break the rule, administrators tend to say "Well, you knew the
rule, so the consequences are your responsibility, not mine." That is
dishonesty, because whatever happens to the student is not intentionally done
by the student; it is intentionally done by the administrator, just as setting
off the bomb is intentionally done by the terrorist, who could have chosen to
do otherwise. The administrator is obeying his or her own rule, which he or she
voluntarily proclaimed and is therefore responsible for -- including its
application. Merely holding another person responsible for an outcome does not
make that person in fact responsible.

I think the only honest way to deal with responsibility is to recognize at all
times who is actually responsible. The administrator does not need to shift
responsibility onto the student. It would be perfectly reasonable to say "I
told you what I would do if you committed that act, and now I am going to do
it." This doesn't create the pretense that the administrator is out of the
picture, and that some abstract rule is somehow enforcing itself. In fact, it
makes perfectly clear the fact that the student would do well to believe the

administrator when told that the administrator will take certain actions if certain behaviors are carried out. This actually gives the student control, because the environment is now predictable and the student is free, as always, to decide whether a consequence of behavior is wanted or not.

This is what Hugh Gibbons calls "respect for the will of others." When we take responsibility for what we ourselves control, and recognize that others are equally responsible for what they control, and that we all have the right to control our own lives, the door is opened for good- faith negotiation. If a teacher says to a student "I am going to protect my right to teach without interference," the student can learn to respect that right if the teacher also respects the right of the student to be in control. If neither one tries to lay off responsibilities onto the other, a practical arrangement can be worked out that respects the will of both parties. The process of working it out will teach the student about a way of dealing with others that will be valuable for a lifetime.

Responsibility can be taken, but not given away.

Best, Bill P.

Date: Sat Feb 04, 1995 2:05 pm PST
Subject: Responsibility

[From Bill Powers (950204.1145 MST)]

Bruce Buchanan (950204.1245 EST) --

>   PCTers like everybody else live in society, or more to the point live in
     families, and in work and legal relationships, where responsibilities are
     not fuzzy, and not only a matter of analysis, but are important matters of
     agreement and mutual expectations.

My point is that responsibilities don't become effective until they are accepted. When they are imposed from without, the attempt to impose them can easily be unsuccessful because behind them is an attempt by one person to control the intentions of another person. It doesn't matter whether it is important or even vital for a person to accept proposed responsibilities; if he or she doesn't accept them, they will not come under that person's control and that person will not, in fact, become responsible for them.

The "importance" of taking on certain responsibilities is in the eye of the beholder and dependent on the beholder's structure of goals. All of society might be of the opinion that an absent father is responsible for paying child support, yet there are millions of absent fathers who are not factually responsible for paying it: that is, they have not set paying child support as a goal of their own, and hence are not, factually, causing child support payments to be made.

Your comment seems to be from the prescriptive point of view, not from the factual point of view. Of course we can discuss, argue, and reach agreement about what responsibilities people OUGHT to take. But if they don't in fact take them, they are not factually responsible for making whatever happen that is supposed to happen. If it happens anyway, someone else was responsible. Your way of putting it simply exemplifies how people go about trying to get others to assume responsibilities, in this case by trying to convince them that there's a sort of natural law at work, or that all right-thinking people would assume the responsibilities. None of that bears on the question of who is factually responsible for what.

>   We are all raised in families, where our survival and prosperity depends
     greatly on whether we live within the rules we are given there. As adults
     we have more freedom of choice about the responsibilities we accept and
     make our own. Why should it be a problem to PCT if my higher level
     reference criteria for certain sorts of responsibilities are set to accord
     with those of my wife, say, or others?
Again, this is how a person would argue who is trying to get someone else to assume a responsibility. It's no problem for PCT to explain how a person accepts a

responsibility and carries it out, or how a person can reject a responsibility and thus not carry it out. Real people do both. PCT has nothing to say about what people become responsible for -- that's a matter for individuals to work out with their friends, family, colleagues, governments, and so on.

>>   . . .[If] you don't choose to assume that responsibility as your own
     goal, then I must try to control you into taking up the responsibility.
     This brings reward and punishment into the picture . . .

>   Certainly this circumstance is common enough. But I do not see why it must
     be the case in principle. It seems to me that an assumption that the
     individual is opposed to the acceptance of social responsibility is neither
     logically required nor the most common experience.

PCT isn't about what some people do, or what most people do; it's about what ALL people do. So from the PCT standpoint, all that can be said about assuming responsibility is that doing so is intentionally taking control of something and bringing it to or maintaining it at some specific reference level. Whether most people will choose to accept responsibilities that others want them to take, or whether they will reject them, is irrelevant. Again, most people accept some responsibilities and reject others; the theory has to cover both outcomes, as it does. If a person does not adopt a suggested goal and start working to carry it out, then those who still want that person to adopt that goal can only start trying to control that person, with the automatic result of resistance (as all control systems resist disturbances). If the person does accept the goal, then that person becomes factually responsible for whatever perception is now being controlled by that person.

>   The fact is that most people are very keen to be accepted and often only
     want to know what is expected of them to include this among their own
     reference variables.

Fine, if that's true. Finding out if it's true isn't a theoretical question: it is or it isn't true, an empirical question. A theory has to handle not only the positive instances but the negative instances, too. "Most people" isn't "everybody." PCT explains what is going on when a person takes on a responsibility, and what is going on when he or she doesn't, and what is going on when someone else tries unsuccessfully to make another person adopt a responsibility.

>   This description obviously is intended to reflect the PCT framework.
     However when it comes to a discussion of the moral and legal implications
     of responsibility, this framework is not very useful. For it seems to me
     that the term responsibility for most people includes notions of commitment
     and accountability, which puts its meaning in terms of higher levels of
     language and more abstract and selective criteria to be applied to lower
     level events.

I think it's very useful. People are always talking about responsibilities that people "have" and become frustrated and confused when it turns out that in fact, they don't have them even when they "should." The confused language in which we talk about responsibility reflects confused thinking about it. The frustration and confusion show up in the way we try to set up rules and apply them as customs or laws. When, despite all our persuasions and threats, large numbers of people simply refuse to behave as if they have the responsibilities we claim they have (meaning "should have"), we have no way of dealing with this but to apply physical force. In effect, we are baffled. We end up concluding that there are good people in the world, who just naturally know what their responsibilities are and carry them out, and evil antisocial people who don't know their responsibilities and fail to carry them out.

PCT tells us what a responsibility IS, where it resides, and how it works. Once we understand that responsibility is not a THING that exists in the air or can be passed on or injected into someone else, we can begin to talk about social responsibilities in a rational way. The real problem lies in how we negotiate with other people to share the work of maintaining a livable world for everyone.

> Unless a person is emotionally arrested at a stage of unreconciled
> adolescent rebellion he or she will not feel that everyone else is always
> trying to impose upon them!

Do you always volunteer to do every good work that everyone you meet wants you
to do? Do you always agree with others as to what your responsibilities to them
or someone else or the nation or the environment are? Do you know anyone who
has different concepts of personal responsibility from those that you accept?
Do you agree with every government regulation that affects you? I think that a
person doesn't have to be "emotionally arrested" (whatever that means) to rebel
against some attempts to impose unwanted responsibilities. You have to get out
of the parochial frame of mind in which you take it for granted that all right-
thinking people will accept the same social goals as personal goals. What's
your attitude to Palestinians, who say that the West has a responsibility to
right all the wrongs the Jews have committed under Western protection? How do
you feel about the ayatollahs who claim that you have a responsibility to keep
your wife's face concealed and to pray five times a day facing Mecca and to
shun pork and alcohol?

>> Responsibility is often spoken of as if it existed independently of any
>> person. And the reason for doing this, paradoxically, is to let the speaker
>> pretend that his or her own goals are not his or her own responsibility.

> I think this is a fair statement of a situation that is common. However I
> also think that most adults would see this in effect as a possible con, an
> argument from authority which requires one to be wary and look for
> explanations.

I think you mean "most adults who are reasonable intelligent people of the kind
I would like them to be." I don't think you're talking about real people. In my
experience, large numbers of people regularly deny responsibility for their own
actions and try to put them off onto other people -- "You're making me angry!"
You're right that when people are on the receiving end of this sort of
treatment they do see it as a con, but then they turn right around and do it to
other people with perfect self- justification.

>> . . . we are responsible only for the intended perceptions, and their
>> external counterparts.

> While I would agree with this (although noting that intentions are not
> always necessarily conscious), I would also note that the consequence may
> well be something we have made our own by a promise or agreement to
> perform, perhaps for some other benefit we expect to receive. As I see it,
> this need not be precluded by PCT.

It's not precluded by PCT; PCT has to accept what we see happening and explain
it. But even making a promise or agreement to perform is no guarantee that a
person will in fact be responsible for performing the act. That depends on
whether the person has accepted keeping promises and agreements as a personal
responsibility. There is no natural law that says people have to keep their
promises, live up to contracts. The mass of laws on contracts attests to that.
If they accept keeping their word as a personal goal, they will probably keep
their word. If they haven't, they probably won't, or will do so only when it's
convenient.

There is simply no level at which we can claim that people HAVE
responsibilities. They accept some and reject others, with whatever
consequences result.

>> But when a student does break the rule, administrators tend to say "Well,
>> you knew the rule, so the consequences are your responsibility, not mine."
>> That is dishonesty ...

> Why is this necessarily dishonest? The fact is that the student knows that
> acceptance of the rules is a condition for attending the school.

It is dishonest because it conceals the intentions of the person who actually
decides to enforce the rules. That is why I spoke about the terrorist first,
who said that if the airplane gets bombed it's the responsibility of the people

who refused to free the prisoners -- they knew the conditions, didn't they?
It's easy to see the dishonesty when you're on the other side. When you are the
person laying off responsibility, it's easy to point to all the good reasons
there are for the rules, and thus why enforcing them is necessary. But the
honest way to do this is to say "I believe in this rule and I intend to enforce
it, whether you agree or not." In other words, you take responsibility for your
own beliefs and the actions you use to maintain them in force. This is much
harder to do, because often people feel ashamed of the things their own rules
seem to require them to do to other people, and they would rather that some
group entity or abstract principle take the blame for the part of the situation
they aren't enjoying.

> A theoretical position which serves to rationalize the opposition of
  students to administrative rules seems to me mistaken, as well as sending
  all the wrong messages to anyone who wishes to exploit such
  misunderstandings.

I disagree. If the students have not accepted the rules for themselves, then
the situation is not at all what the administrators think it is. The
administrators think that the problem is "disobedience", when in fact it is the
failure to take into account that students are also control systems and can't
help acting like control systems. If the administrators take a punitive, stern,
implacable, controlling attitude toward the students, then of course the
students are going to resist. If they didn't, there would be something wrong
with them.

A theoretical position can't be mistaken just because it leads to conclusions
that are inconvenient for someone. The fact is that students do often oppose
administrative rules, and this probably indicates something wrong with the
administration, or the rules. The students are being required to do something
that is contrary to human nature. But this is the last thing administrators
want to hear -- that they are creating the problem themselves. What they want
is for the students to behave.

Ed Ford's associates have produced some startling effects by using PCT in the
classroom. There are definitely rules, but certain rules have simply
disappeared. As one of his associates put it, they have redefined what is meant
by a "discipline problem." A discipline problem is behavior that infringes on
the rights of the teacher to teach and the other students to learn. Coming late
to class, forgetting pencils and paper, not doing homework, falling asleep in
class, and other such problem behaviors are not discipline problems. They may
be academic problems, or social problems, or emotional problems, but they are
not discipline problems and they do not call for disciplinary measures. They
call for help.

And even a discipline problem is handled by offering choices within the rules.
The disruptive student can remain in class by ceasing to disrupt. Or the
student can go to what used to be called "detention" but has been changed into
a social skills class -- but even in that class the student has the option of
just sitting there, as well as the option of working with an adult to figure
out how to solve the problem. And the student can get back into class at any
time by negotiating with the teacher to try some different kind of behavior to
get what is wanted. Sure, all this takes place within a framework of clear
rules, but the discipline that takes place has become self-discipline, not
punishment. The students are treated with respect at all times, even in the
"social skills class" and even after they return to class. They are treated as
human beings, as we understand them under PCT.

My point is that it's easy to blame the victims, but far more effective to
understand what is going on and act accordingly. PCT doesn't prescribe any ways
of dealing with children or anyone else. But knowing PCT, people like Ed and
his associates can start trying out different approaches, gradually changing
the relationships between rule-givers and rule-livers in the light of our new
understanding of how people work. And this seems to solve some rather severe
problems.

Interestingly, the teachers, students, bus-drivers, cafeteria workers, and
advisers are all quite happy with this program. But the administrators,
apparently, hate it.

>   ... it seems irresponsible to argue that one might be justified in ignoring rules at any time because one has not given one's personal assent. This would not really be defensible in any organization, not least one devoted to education.

But you never obey a rule unless you have given your personal assent to it, and adopted it as your own rule. It would be impossible to act according to a rule that has not become your own goal -- who would operate your arms and legs? You might adopt it because you really agree with it, or because you fear the consequences of not adopting it, but if you obey the rule, adopt it you did. I am open to a theoretical discussion of how it could be otherwise.

The real question is how much conflict has been created by your adoption of the rule. If you agreed with the rule, there was probably none. But if you disagreed, you disagreed because following the rule would cause errors relative to other goals you have. Being threatened with even greater errors if you do not follow the rule may persuade you to adopt it, but the other goals have not been dealt with and the errors are still there. Unless some way is found to reduce the internal conflict that results from accepting an unwanted rule, the person accepting it is going to be under great internal stress and will continually be looking for a way to lessen the other errors. So you'll end up with kids running in the hall when no teacher is looking, or popping pills in the restroom stalls, or sneaking out behind the gym to show off a new gun, or waiting until school is out and then knocking up a cheerleader, or getting knocked up. When you see shrieking kids exploding out of a school every day at 3:15, you know there is something wrong. What are they celebrating?

>>   This is what Hugh Gibbons calls "respect for the will of others."

>   Is it really? As described, it seems more like a mindless _acceptance_ of constraints imposed upon the situation by others. This is what I understand the Mafia mean by respect! This might be necessary for the very young and inexperienced but is scarcely desirable in principle.

The first thing you have to do to get along with other people is to learn what they want and how their behavior enables them to get it. This is just as true when you're dealing with the Mafia as when you're dealing with a saint. Other people will always act to control their own worlds in the states they prefer. And as long as that doesn't harm you or anything or anyone you care about, more power to them. Sometimes, however, you don't accept their goals; to respect the will of another is not necessarily to agree with it. Before you can act rationally toward another person, you have to understand how that person works. If you decide to use force on the other person, you should understand what the likely result is. If you're caught in an irrational system, such as Nazi Germany 60 years ago, you need to understand that there are people whose wills are causing the situation, and you need to respect that fact before you start thinking of ways out. It would probably be to your advantage to understand what the administrators of that system will do if you break the rules they have set, and plan accordingly. Wishing that they would change the rules, or hoping that you could persuade them to make an exception, would not be realistic and would decrease your control over the situation.

>   ... perhaps the PCT framework would also accommodate the view that responsibility can be assigned after it is understood and accepted, i.e. incorporated in one's own reference criteria?

Well, I would be very interested in hearing how you would propose to assign responsibility unilaterally. Isn't the whole problem the step of it's being "understood and accepted"? AFTER it's accepted, there's no problem with assigning it; it's already been taken. All the problems come BEFORE it's accepted. I may understand completely what responsibility you would like to assign to me, but that may only increase my resolve to reject it. What, I'm supposed to turn on the gas every morning in the "shower room"? No, but thanks for thinking of me.

------ (950204.1245 EST)

> Well, it still seems to me that "Feeling free", as a basic if subjective
> aspect of experience, in which we are aware of possible choices and the
> consequences of alternative commitments, is still a legitimate way to
> describe one perspective. Admittedly it is not the whole story. But then
> neither is any particular theoretical formulation of the situation,
> including PCT.

That sounds pretty harmless, a "legitimate way to describe one perspective." I
don't think it would be very satisfying to anyone who wants to know whether the
feeling of freedom is an illusion, and if so, in what respects.

> To choose to ignore the "highest" goal implies, I think, an overriding goal
> or value. It may be a choice to end life in order to end pain and
> suffering. The lives of the saints show that people may die willingly for
> what they believe to be a higher value, perhaps represented by their god,
> and also believe this is a true assertion of freedom.

But that just pushes the problem up a level. I don't think we can go on doing
that forever; our brains are finite and when we try to go up one level too many
we find ourselves looking at bone.

Best, Bill P.

Date: Sun Feb 05, 1995 12:36 pm PST
Subject: Good "discipline" vibrations

[From Rick Marken (950205.1120)]

Bill Powers (950203.1450 MST) --

> We are responsible only for those effects we control. No other reading of
> the word makes sense.

> I had some doubts about Ed Ford's use of the term responsibility for just
> this reason.

Me too. Indeed, the subtitle to Ed's most recent book ("Discipline for home and
school") is "Teaching children to respect the rights of others through
responsible thinking based on perceptual control theory".

When a hot-headed control theorist, like myself, hears talk of "teaching people
to think responsibly" he hears it as a code for "teach people to think the way
I think they should think". Teaching responsible thinking implies (to me) that
the teacher knows what another person should control for and that "discipline"
(punishment) will be used if the person doesn't control for what the teacher
thinks (responsibly) should be controlled for. Nazi's knew how to teach
responsible thinking; Muslim fundamentalists are teaching Salman Rushdie how to
think responsibly.

Of course, Ed's book is not about how to be a Nazi or a Muslim fundamentalist.
But, as Bill says in his forward to Ed's book.

"If you just listen to the words used in this book, you might get an
uncomfortable feeling... Discipline, establishing rules, obedience, making
commitments, responsibility... they mean _shape up_!"

Bill might have been talking to me when he wrote this. Now, after seeing the
presentation by Ed and his colleagues last year in Durango, and after reading
Bill's description of Ed's program in the Forward, I think I have a much better
idea of what Ed is up to -- and I like it! Here's how Bill described Ed's
"discipline" program in the Forward:

"Achieving discipline in the classroom is no longer a question of cowing
children into sitting quietly in rows; it is a question of communicating to
children their own power to make choices and decisions, to pick workable goals

and achieve them, to find a reasonable and pleasant way to live with others...".

That is, Ed's program is about teaching kids how to be in control while allowing others to be in control too. Ed might not describe what he does (which is to teach cooperative control) the way I would describe it, but what he does is apparently what I would do -- which is sure more than I'm doing;-).

Best   Rick

Date: Mon Feb 06, 1995 5:24 pm PST
Subject: Discipline and Responsibility

(From Ed Ford 950206.near noon MST)

Rick Marken (950205)

Rick, you spoke well about what I do. When you teach children to respect the rights of others, this is primarily done by example. Thus teachers must respect their students when dealing with a disruption, as well as at other times. For humans to get along, respect for another's rights is critical. Even on the CSGnet. Just let someone invade with a self-serving advertisement and you'll get a perfect example.

The program continues to evolve and develop. One interesting thing we discovered is that those teachers and staff members whose own lives are filled with disharmony are finding it hard to teach a "life skill", which is what we're really doing, to children when teachers and staff themselves lack those very skills. We got a powerful letter from a teacher on that very issue. She admitted she had never taken responsibility for her own life, continually blaming others, and admitted it was hard to teach her students to do something she had never done. She also admitted attempting to re-build her own life, using the very materials and program we were using with the students.

I think that responsibility has to do with keeping one's own system in harmony with itself. The best understanding of this comes from the three highest levels of HPCT. I've translated Bill's terms to read choices (program level), standards or rules (principles) and values or beliefs (systems concepts level). For me to operate in a way consistent with how I've designed or created my perceptions at these three levels, they should consistently operate in harmony with each other. Thus the choices I make should be in harmony with my standards or rules as well as those of the culture where I choose to be, and those standards and rules should be in harmony with my values or beliefs.

In private counseling (I've just this year given up my private practice because of the demands from my educational consulting), I've always worked with people using the questioning technique (the only way I've found to initially get people to think and learn to use their internal world). Asking them such questions as what they're doing, what are their standards or the standards of those around them, what the consequences to breaking their own or another's standards are, is that what they want to happen, what they want now, what their priorities are (at the systems concepts level), what will happen if they keep doing what they are presently doing in the area that is concerning them, is what you're doing work for you -- such questions get people to exam their own worlds in such a way as to help them to reorganize with the least amount of disruption and the most amount of efficiency. Teaching comes in when they need help building plans in areas where they have little or no expertise. In other words, teaching them to use the internal feedback loop such that they can learn how to imagine, plan, and think in various areas where they are presently finding conflict.

With children, this works remarkably well. It has had powerful effects on the schools where this has been implemented. Since a frontpage article appeared in the Arizona Republic (cir. 600,000) about my program, followed by a half hour news report by a local TV station, I have been overwhelmed with schools interested in what I'm doing. That's why I haven't been active on the CSGnet.

The wonderful thing about all this is that PCT is at the very heart of the program. Every action we take, every new twist to the program that is taken, it is all consistent with PCT. It has to be. Schools are excited and the model is being taught. A Canadian school bus company which contracts with schools to bus their children throughout the US and Canada has contracted with me to create a program for their drivers, 25,000 of them. We will be creating videos with commercial quality delivery and I'll be using the PCT concept as the model. Another national professional broadcasting company has produced a minute and a half TV spot which is soon to be released nationally to a syndicated group of stations about my program. That's what I mean by being overwhelmed.

One of my favorite prayers is one from St. Francis "Lord, make me an instrument of your peace." Wouldn't it be nice to see peace come to the chaos now found in so many schools, all through a better understanding of PCT. That's what happened at our model school. There's no reason it can't happen in all schools. A little overwhelming, isn't it?

Best, Ed.

Date: Mon Feb 06, 1995 5:41 pm PST
Subject: Do you have to teach what's natural?

[From Bill Powers (950206.1600 MST)]

Bruce Nevin (Mon 93026 11:38:51 EST)--

>   The importance that mammals, at least, evidently attach to having reliable
>   relationships with their fellows suggests strongly that intrinsic values of
>   some reference perceptions are involved here. It is worth thinking through
>   carefully how perceptions of social responsibility, reliability,
>   interdependence, dependability, and so on might arise. (Testing might be
>   difficult.)

If these are intrinsic values for mammals, then all baby mammals would be born having such values and nobody would have to teach the babies, reward them, or punish them into having these values.

The fact that children (apparently) have to be taught so-called responsibility is direct evidence that this and related concepts are not products of evolution or inheritance. It tells us that responsibility etc is a human invention, passed along and modified or reinvented by each new generation, each new group within each new generation.

If we look at WHAT is taught, we find that some people want to control others because of the effects others have on them, and in doing so they employ all the methods of control that work. This includes reasoning, persuasion, negotiation, demonstration, being an example, withholding necessities until the desired behavior is seen (reward), and causing intrinsic error until the desired behavior is seen (punishment). What behavior is wanted from others is a highly individual matter and varies radically across the population and even within so-called "groups."

>   People I am sure do use notions of (social) responsibility as a smoke
>   screen for their evasion of having to effect their own ends by their own
>   efforts, as you suggest, but the materials from which they erect the smoke
>   screen are socially available, known and agreed to ahead of time by their
>   fellows. If they simply made it up in a novel way that had no connection
>   with prior, known-to-be- shared notions of social relations and
>   expectations, no one would have any particular reason to go along with it.

This idea of "shared notions of social relations and expectations" is a myth. When we start using such terms, we have stopped speaking of society and are speaking of the small part of it we have experienced and from which we have drawn generalizations of dubious generality. Every time we speak of what "people" do, we're speaking of people who live on Park Avenue, in a Black or Jewish or Irish or Haitian ghetto, on Indian reservations, in the Deep South, in igloos, at the edge of rice paddies, and in jungles -- to mention a few places. We're speaking of people who will grow up to be or already are

criminals, judges, scientists, sociologists, linguists, group leaders, loners,
day laborers, explorers, technicians, suicides, Republicans, Democrats,
terrorists, Moslems, generals of private armies, faith-healers, cops,
preachers, cult leaders, paid assassins, kings, and mathematicians.

What I've been trying to get across is that responsibility is whatever you
decide it is. It's like "family values," which are also whatever you decide
they are. There is nothing mysterious here, no mysterious forces from evolution
or "society" that lead us to adopt responsibilities or values. There are only
interactions with other people, other people who have an incredible array of
different desires and beliefs, other people who always assume that THEIR
concept of the good society and right behavior toward others is the only one.
Trying to generalize is hopeless; inevitably it creates a parochial view of
what "social factors" are important.

What we need to understand is how people interact with the people around them.
We can't understand this by looking at any particular values, beliefs, customs,
rules, and so forth. Those are all happenstance and could have come out
completely different. The point is to explain how a group of people arrive at
equilibrium positions on various subjects like family values or responsibility
or religion. Doing this requires a theory that doesn't take sides. If people do
arrive at accommodations with each other, it isn't because they inherit a
tendency to do so, but because of how living control systems work. And if the
theory's any good, it should work for a soldier of fortune just as well as for
Albert Schweitzer.

> Your description sounds like a conspiracy of lazy con artists against other
>   more gullible individuals whom they exploit by invoking social
>   responsibilities. Was that what you intended, or have I misunderstood?

Yes, lazy con artists and gullible individuals do exist and interact, and PCT
ought to be able to explain the interaction. But PCT also works in cases where
an adult decides that children ought to be responsible for certain things like
personal cleanliness, saying the proper prayers, and sitting quietly in school,
and in fact many children are successfully taught these things. PCT has to
explain that, too, as well as the children who fail to go along with the
teaching.

The moment you start trying to explain why taking certain responsibilities and
showing certain social behaviors is good and natural, you've admitted that they
are arbitrary. If they were objectively good and natural, you wouldn't have to
persuade anyone to go along with them. The moment you start giving the reasons
why some particular behaviors are better than others, you have ceased to think
as a theoretician and are simply acting out your own reference levels. You're
just being an example of a person trying to change other people's behavior to
fit certain private goals.

Best,   Bill P.

Date: Wed Feb 08, 1995 5:38 pm PST
Subject: Responsibility; social conflict;
          purposive light bulbs

[From Bill Powers (950208.1640 MST)]

[Martin Taylor 950208 10:30]

> Sounds great. Is Utah snowy in winter?

For the past 10 days it's been beautiful, clear and warm. Today, after we had
breakfast 40 miles down the road, we turned around and came back. Yes, Utah is
snowy in winter. We waited a bit too long.

>> But all of this means nothing with respect to what a person's
>>   responsibilities actually, factually, ARE.

> Since we are dealing ONLY with an agreement about the usage of a word, the
> notion of "what a person's responsibilities actually, factually, ARE" is
> kind of vacuous, don't you think?

Put the shoe on the other foot. Isn't the point that I'm arguing against that
there are, in fact, responsibilities that people "have?" For example, you say

> But a perception or set of related perceptions exists in many of us, that
> we label "responsibility." That perception has a value.

To say it "has a value" is clear enough if we all understand that it has a
value for the person who has adopted the responsibility. The value is the
reference state of the variable for which the person has decided to be
responsible.

> Yes, you can say that the car driver "is" or "should be held" responsible
> for these things. Or you can say otherwise, that ONLY the controlled CEV is
> the driver's responsibility. It's a question of where you apply your value
> threshold to the perception in saying that the perception "exists."

What you or I say about the driver's responsibility is irrelevant, because that
is OUR perception of consequences of the DRIVER's action. We have no control
over those consequences, unless we decide to erect safety barriers, take away
drivers' licenses of people who drive dangerously or suicidally, and so on.

The point I am trying to make is that when we say another person "has" a
responsibility, we are either trying to describe a fact, or to prescribe the
adoption of a goal. If the former, the only meaning that makes sense is that we
are saying that the driver does in fact have control of the event for which we
say he or she has responsibility. If the driver does not have control of the
event, then saying the driver has a responsibility for it is simply false
unless we really mean to be prescribing, saying the driver _should_ take
responsibility, _should_ take control of the event.

This leaves out one possible meaning of saying that a person "has" a
responsibility: the meaning that says that responsibilities objectively exist,
independently of the person who has or should have or wants someone to have
them. This is the position of many moralists.

This is a subtle way of proposing moral rules as if they are natural laws,
imposed from outside any mere human agency. The god in the volcano says you are
responsible for providing sacrifices of virgins once each year, whether you
want to be or not. This purported imposition of responsibility by a superhuman
agent is a ploy to keep the person informing you of this responsibility from
being blamed personally for telling you that you must accept the goal of
sacrificing virgins every year.

Even this attempt to shift blame is revealed as an attempt to control a
person's intentions when the question arises, "What if I don't take
responsibility for sacrificing virgins?" Ah, says the High Priest, then you
will be horribly punished. Your crops will fail, you will suffer disease, you
will be characterized as a witch, and the volcano god will command the other
villagers to dismember you and burn you. And don't look at me like that, I'm
just telling you what the volcano god told me.

So my argument is that there is no reasonable way in which we can talk about
responsibility that makes it into something objective, independent of people's
intentions.

One last point: the perception of being a responsible person is a different
matter entirely. That is a self-concept, and people can consider themselves to
be responsible people without actually taking responsibility for any specific
thing. I am talking here about being responsible for specific outcomes of
behavior, not about ways we characterize ourselves in general.

Joel Judd (950208.0800CST)--

>   With the recent discussion of respect for the nature of individual control
     systems, I get the impression that in fact perceptual control systems
     (i.e., human beings) are NOT particularly social beings; in fact, we would
     be better off having LESS contact with other in many cases, especially
     after we mature--after puberty.

An interesting point you bring up. I think we all know the advantages of
forming social systems -- every word I write in the manner and for the purpose
I write here is an example -- but nobody in this discussion has mentioned the
disadvantages before.

Living with other people is a problem of collision avoidance in hyperspace. You
not only have to avoid physically bumping into others, but you have to avoid
using means of control that create serious disturbances of many controlled
variables maintained by all others in your vicinity. There's a conflict
involved: you need the other people to make your own control easier, yet the
other people start to snap and growl when you start encroaching on their sets
of controlled variables (and you snap and growl right back when they do it to
you). The more people you have to interact with, the greater the conflict gets.

I can see a kernel here for an extremely interesting sociological analysis of
human interactions. To resurrect an old term, it's an approach-avoidance
conflict in multiple dimensions. One way we try to minimize it is to propose
rules: here, you hold my package for a minute and I'll go through first, then
you can hand all the packages to me and come through after me -- OK? We set up
and agree on little temporary rules like that all the time, to help each other
do things while avoiding collisions. Laws and customs are just larger and
somewhat more permanent versions of the same thing.

Bruce Buchanan (950208.1300 EST) --

The citation from Pierre de Latil is science fiction (maybe that's why the
forward to his book was written by Isaac Asimov). Latil's great discovery about
classes of effectors is pure sophistry. I don't know why it has greatly
influenced you for 40 years, unless perhaps it triggered off thoughts of your
own that were considerably more competent than Latil's.

I agree completely with Martin Taylor's reply.

Best to all,   Bill P.

Date: Fri Feb 10, 1995 12:19 am PST
Subject: Re: responsibility

<[Bill Leach 950209.21:37 EST(EDT)]
>[Bill Powers (950203.1450 MST)]

>   I had some doubts about Ed Ford's use of the term responsibility for just
     this reason. A school administrator may set up a rule that a certain kind
     of behavior is forbidden, and that infractions are to be followed by
     certain consequences for the student. So far, so good: rules are needed.
     But when a student does break the rule, administrators tend to say "Well,
     you knew the rule, so the consequences are your responsibility, not mine."
     That is dishonesty, because whatever ...

I must be reading Ed a bit differently than you... except that you say
"administrators tend to say".

People do attempt to control their own environments (rightly or wrongly) and
that includes those that "run" schools. While the student has little choice
about attending school or not (from a legal standpoint that is), in my opinion
what Ed has attempted to do is to establish a "system" where a student may

actually learn something about "consequences of actions" as opposed to "just being dumped upon".

While in the purest sense (and essentially turning around your terrorism example), if the Fed throws me into jail for refusing to pay taxes to what I perceive as a "corrupt" government, it is not really a case of "Well, you knew the rule, so the consequences are your responsibility, not mine." However, I do know the rules (at least in a general enough fashion to know that I must pay the taxes that the government claims that I owe or suffer the consequences).

To deny or especially to teach that one does not have to be concerned at all about the perceptions that others form concerning one's own actions would be irresponsible at best. The "gap" between a PCT understanding of the world and the "common" understanding is hugh but I believe that the work of Ed Ford will help to reduce the difference.

> I think the only honest way to deal with responsibility is to recognize at
> all times who is actually responsible. The administrator does not need to
> shift responsibility onto the student. It would be perfectly reasonable to
> say "I told you what I would do if you committed that act, and now I am
> going to do it." This doesn't create the pretense that the administrator is
> out of the picture, and that some abstract rule is somehow enforcing
> itself. In fact, it makes perfectly clear the fact that the student would
> do well to believe the administrator when told that the administrator will
> take certain actions if certain behaviors are carried out. This actually
> gives the student control, because the environment is now predictable and
> the student is free, as always, to decide whether a consequence of behavior
> is wanted or not.

Now I ask you to help me... If the preceding IS NOT the gist of what Ed has been teaching, then I have been misunderstand Ed and I suppose that I need some help seeing how I missed it...

-bill

Date: Mon Feb 13, 1995 8:57 pm PST
Subject: Re: Inverted-T; E. coli analysis

[Bill Leach 950213.22:42 EST(EDT)]

I just got off the phone after a fascinating discussion with Ed Ford.

I all but accused Ed of using PCT to implement a discipline program designed around standards THAT HE SET. I did not intend to be "negative" with my comments (nor do I feel that Ed took them as negative) but rather he pointed out something of vital importance that was not explicitly understood by me concerning application of PCT to solutions for real world system problems.

As most (if not all) on the net are aware, Ed has designed and directed the implementation of a public school discipline program in some Arizona schools based upon the understanding of how people actually function as explained by PCT. He has published a book concerning this program (listed in the net intro message): "Discipline for home and school". The success of the program has created considerable excitement among teachers and parents (in particular) and of course among many PCTers.

My own mind may well have been working "overtime" with the "morally and ethically neutral" assertion of PCT argument raging here lately (I need SOME excuse). The point that I was missing is that Ed is not and does not try to evaluate or judge the rules and standards of the school AS A PART OF THE PROGRAM.* His program tries to teach the idea that when rules exist for a particular activity (with the necessary enforcement) then a choice exists to either comply with the rules and participate OR not comply and not participate.

It seems to me that there are two aspects of this program that are equally vital. The first is that students actually be taught that they really do have choices concerning how they choose to control their own perceptions (that is,

how they react to disturbances) and "authority" (teachers and administrators) ALSO recognize the truth of that situation.

Of course learning to "go up a level", identify and resolve internal conflicts and the like are also important (and naturally are an extremely important part of the program).

The idea is that the "world is" and is often (usually?) beyond our influence (at least in some matters) but must be dealt with as it is found, is (I believe) the essence of what Ed is doing. In the "long run" if what he is doing really catches on then the rules themselves will "improve" but that is not the point NOW.

Indeed, the problem will always be how to deal with the world as it is not with how it should be. How it "should be" we can work on (or not -- as we choose individually) but how it "is" we ignore at our own peril.

I recognize that this may be so obvious to everyone else that they (you) are wondering where "this nut" is coming from. I suppose that for me, it is a case of "I sorta saw that before" but now it is "real".

* Though I did not ask, I don't doubt that Ed does do a lot of work on getting teachers and administrators to examine their rules for consistency with their goal.

-bill

Date: Sun Feb 19, 1995 1:49 pm PST
Subject: Creating Interest in PCT

Ed Ford 950219.1220MST

Marc, Rick, others

Regarding getting others interested in PCT. I find the best way to do this is first find those who need a practical solution to what you have to offer. In my case, I teach techniques for dealing with others, especially in difficult situations, such as public schools, probation work, residential treatment centers, etc. Public schools are having to deal more and more with very disruptive children. Some find out about me and look to me for help. Once things get a lot better, perhaps there may be someone who expresses more than just a casual interest in PCT. Not that I haven't been explaining it, using it as the basis for the practical applications that have been working for my clients. The problem is that most people could care less. You saved their butts and that's what they were controlling for. I've had four educators out of the thousands that have heard me, show an intense interest in PCT, enough to attend our annual conferences. My friend Jim Soldani, when he successfully managed a plant for Intel, and got unbelievable results for eight straight months, told me no one, but no one cared how he did it and about the theory (PCT) upon which it was based.

Marc Abrams said it to me recently. No one has tied their theories to practical solutions of every day problems. But even if you do, and to some extent I have, very, very few care. I guess there are very few humans with enough "fire in their belly" (my latest expression) who really want to think things through sufficiently to learn why and how it all works. The most fascinating thing about PCT is not the theory itself, but the delightful way you can use it when looking for practical solutions in difficult settings. I just perceive things now through my PCT perceptual glasses. And when dealing with those who could care less about your glasses, you realize, as you look through those glasses, you can't set another's reference levels nor get them to perceive the world as you do. As one school bus driver said after learning to deal with children, "I'm calmer and so is my bus." The theory had little appeal to her. Only the fact she now "enjoyed driving all those crazy kids to and from school."

Enough said. Best, Ed.

Date:Thu Feb 23, 1995 10:53 pm PST
Subject: Knowing What You Want..

Ed Ford 950223.2140MST

Both in corrections and education along with counseling, "knowing what you
want" is a very commonly heard. I think the problem can be one of conflict,
which means not being able to decide which reference level or want you want to
decide on. Thus, the wants are known, but the priorities for those wants have
never really be thought out or mutually exclusive. For example, a single parent
with three children desiring an adult relationship could easily create conflict
within herself (or himself) if the relationship began to take needed time away
from her children.

The other "not knowing what we want" that occurs to me is a conflict "at some
level." I might have a hard time as a veggie deciding which kind of apple I
want, but not whether I would eat a steak meal over a salad. One is totally
compatible with my Veggie values and the choice would have nothing to do with
my systems concepts. The steak choice would be dictated by my higher order
"veggie" value. Often times, when children are in conflict, saying "they don't
know what they want" really means they don't want to decide. But in any case,
I'll just ask them if, for example, they want to stay in the classroom and obey
the rules or go to the social skills room (which are their obvious wants).
However, there could be other wants, such as wanting to go home, to see the
school psychologist or an administrator. When you ask and name specific wants,
I find it helps people, whose internal conflict(s) have them somewhat confused
in their thinking, direct their thinking and make clear distinctions so they
can more easily make a judgement.

Knowing the three top levels helps a person deal with highly conflicted people
because you can ask questions at one level or another and help the person
discover at what level their conflicts reside. No matter if it's at program
level (choices), principles level (standards, rules, criteria) or systems
concepts level (values, beliefs), it helps to articulate what you perceive as
the possible options or possibilities to those who struggle to deal with their
own internal world of conflicts.

_____

The other night I was trying to cut some hair around my ear and in front of my
eyes and it seemed to me that here was a clear example of controlling a
perception. In fact, if you were trimming someone else's hair and trying the
same thing, there wouldn't be much difficulty. But cutting your own hair while
looking in the mirror makes you painfully aware that you really are trying to
control a perception that doesn't represent the reality of what you are trying
to do. At least it did for me....

Best, Ed.

Date:Sun Feb 26, 1995 8:38 am PST
Subject: Re: punishment, teaching responsibility

[From Bill Powers (950226.0730 MST)]

Bill Leach (950225.19:59 EST(EDT))--

>   It seems to me that "punishment" does have the 'ability' to create conflict
     and the resulting reorganization activity. Even the 'sharp NO!' is
     punishment, yes? It certainly is usually a disturbance to a controlled
     perception.

Yes, I agree. Look at it this way: punishment is not an act (i.e., hitting
someone) but setting up a contingency so that certain behavior on another
person's part will lead to consequences that person doesn't want to happen --
consequences that amount to errors. Hitting someone for no reason is just an
attack. It's only a punishment if it's understood that it follows from a rule:
do that and I'll hit you (implying: don't do it, and I won't hit you).

There are natural contingencies of this sort, but we don't call them
"punishment." If you're careless with a favorite toy it will break, and that's
just the nature of things. We would only call this consequence a punishment if
someone else made a rule like "Every time you talk back to me I am going to
break one of your toys." A punishment is something that one person does to
another because of a rule that person made (or adopted from someone else) and
is acting out.

> It still seems to me, that prior to the ability to reason or handle many
> "higher level" abstractions, punishment is a better way to "induce"
> reorganization than the natural consequences of continued behavior.

At the very least, wouldn't the punishee have to be able to understand a rule
like "Each time you do X, I will do Y"? If the cause-effect rule isn't
understood, the punishing act Y will simply be perceived as an attack delivered
for no reason. When very young children are punished by a parent, I think the
message they get is simple: daddy or mommy hurts me, or doesn't like me. Do
this enough, and the child concludes "I am unlovable and worthless." The idea
that an abstract cause-effect relationship is intended can't be understood
before some age. If you depend on reorganizing effects due to the punishing act
itself, without understanding, there is no predicting what kind of change of
behavior will occur. Skinner was against punishment for this reason. While it
could apparently cause a specific action to cease, what took its place was
completely unpredictable.

I think there's a finite window in childrens' development where punishment --
if not sadistic -- will simply be accepted as a part of life. Most games
contain punishments: "Go to jail. Go directly to jail. Do not pass Go. Do not
collect $200." There isn't even anything one can necessarily do to avoid them;
they're just the breaks of the game, a consequence of landing on the wrong
spot. Other games have punishing consequences, such as loss of points for lying
about the cards you have in your hand -- teaching the lesson that the crime is
not lying but getting caught lying. Games with winners and losers automatically
punish all but one person, the winner. I'm not quite sure what moral lessons
such games are getting across, but children accept the rules without too much
fuss. The main lesson they learn is that they have to accept the rules if they
want to play.

This window ends, I think, somewhere near adolescence. It ends when children
become aware of who is making the rules that lead to punishment. One of the
great insights is that if the rule didn't exist, there wouldn't be any
punishment. So if the rules are arbitrary and the child doesn't see any general
good in them, chances are that there will be a rebellion against the rule-
makers, who are seen simply as bullies who insist on getting what they want
(however, see below for a caution that this may not be a universal truth).

> Like it or not, we DO have this concept of 'responsibility' that others
> will (attempt) to hold us to. This is life as it is. Some of these
> 'responsibilities' are codified into laws (not saying that they are
> necessarily codified very well -- but that is irrelevant anyway). Others
> are just "rules" but rules which when 'broken' have someone that has some
> ability to force consequences to occur. Children will (hopefully) have to
> live long enough to have to deal with this "rule system". Calling such
> "responsibility" or "accepting the consequences for the results of one's
> own behavior" is the typical term.

This is why I was a problem child. I had to see for myself some good in the
rules before I would accept that they were worth living up to. A great many of
the rules that were imposed by elders seemed totally capricious to me; the only
consideration was not offending the rule- makers enough to bring them down on
my head. I was probably about two steps from a life of crime. It took me quite
a while to get all this sorted out and develop my own ethical system so I could
begin to have some concern for promoting goodness in the world. Neither reward
nor punishment succeeded in making me docile, as some of my colleagues here may
attest.

When people speak of responsibilities they and others should have to society,
they're almost always thinking about the society they like, the one they grew
up in. So it appears that teaching children to go along with the rules of their

society is a good thing, promoting social harmony and mutual support. What they
don't seem to realize that this is much too simple a principle and not at all a
good thing to teach children past a certain age. What it does is to bring up
children to believe that they must be loyal to their own society _no matter
what it does_. Then, when their horizons broaden and they come into contact
with other societies, they are unable to understand how other people could be
just as loyal to a social system that breaks many rules they were taught (by
reward and punishment) are important. Instead of promoting the general social
welfare, this principle of upbringing creates innumerable little groups who are
fiercely loyal to those they agree with, and fiercely hostile to everyone else.
There is a very fine line between teaching mutual support and cooperation and
teaching xenophobia.

If I were teaching responsibility to older children, I would follow most of Ed
Ford's method, but I would go beyond it. At some point I would explain to
children what rules are, and who makes them, and why. I would explain not only
why it is good to seek agreement and cooperation with others, but why it is
even better to figure out your own ways of living with others. I would ask
children of Democrats to imagine what it would be like if they had been raised
by Republicans, or Nazis, or hippies, or atheists, and of course all the other
combinations. I would ask them if the things they believed in were true ONLY
because they had been raised to believe them, or whether they could find some
reason to believe them -- or something else -- that didn't depend on how they
were raised. I would give them problems, like supposing they had been raised in
some other society they know about, like North Korea, and imagining what they
would think of "right" and "wrong" as a result. In short, I would introduce
them to the study of ethics, which goes well beyond accidents of upbringing.

Of course I would probably get tossed out by angry parents and administrators,
who definitely think that THEIR social rules are the RIGHT ones, and everyone
else's are wrong.

> As in all attempts to "control others", this one will have its limits and
>   its problems. No doubt some children will be able to "control around" some
>   of the requirement with varying degrees of success.

A question to ponder: if some children are found to "control around" some of
the requirements, why are they trying to do so? Are they just nasty evil bad
kids? Or is the system somehow trying to make them violate something important
to them? I'm reminded of one of the most striking effects of Ed's program,
which has been not a change in the kids but a change in the rules. The
definition of a "discipline problem" has been changed so it does not apply to
trivia like forgetting pencils and not doing homework, but concerns only
violations of the rights of others to learn or to teach. We have to fix what's
wrong with the social system as well as what's wrong with kids' behavior.

Bill Leach (950225.18:50 EST(EDT)--

> We believe that this reality HAS consistency and regularity. This one, I
>   admit, is a bit tougher. Though this assumption is the basis for science,
>   it is just as unprovable as any other perception.

What is provable is that we can learn how to control our perceptions. If action
is properly related to error (inside us), our perceptions will be affected so
as to stay near their preferred values. It's only a short step to infer that
between the actions and the perceptions they affect, there must be some
reasonably consistent laws, out there where we can't see them. We can't prove
that there aren't some other, but operationally equivalent, laws, but that
there are laws seems beyond doubt.

By this I mean that there really may be 'inborn' reasons why people generally
have similar conceptions of 'right' and 'wrong'. Now PLEASE don't let this set
a _flag_!!

Who, me? I completely agree with you, totally, one hundred percent. People
generally believe that reincarnation is right and being bound to the wheel of
desire is wrong. It is right to raid your neighbors to take their heads, as
long as you do it for a good reason and show proper respect while you eat the

brain. It is wrong for races to mix, wrong to be an atheist, wrong to be a
Democrat. Everybody knows that. It's good that we all have similar conceptions
of "right" and "wrong." Otherwise, we'd always be fighting with each other,
wouldn't we?

;-)> Best to all, Bill P.

Date: Tue Mar 07, 1995 4:34 pm PST
Subject: musings

[From Bill Powers (950307.1625 MST)]

Bill Leach (answer to direct post) --

Your musings seem on the mark to me, for the most part. But I think the one you
were most concerned with is the question of "right and wrong."

If "right" means "matching my reference level" then there is an inborn sense of
right and wrong. But most of us, I think, have or once had a feeling that there
are _specific_ rights and wrongs that are built into us, and there I no longer
agree. I was raised by a person who thought that if you didn't just _know_ what
was right and wrong, there was something wrong with you, right? I now see this
view as reflecting a rather severe lack of self-understanding. What tipped me
off was the realization that different people have different senses of right
and wrong, plus the sudden jolt that came from seeing that if something is
really inborn, you don't need to be taught it; you'll do it without even
thinking. when you figure out _why_ certain things seem right or wrong, you'll
understand your own organization better, as well as understanding human nature
better.

Best to all,   Bill P.