Behavior as Telosponsivity Rather Than Responsivity

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After demonstrating that Freud could not adapt his basically teleological image of humanity to the mechanistic accounts of his day, a change in terminology is proposed to allow for telic formulations to be made in the future. Psychology's total reliance on efficient causation is the reason why there are only machine models available today. Drawing on final causation, the concept of telosponsivity is introduced and then elaborated in terms of its reliance on predication, tautology, and oppositionality. In pursuing his "logical learning theory," the author has provided empirical research support for the concept of telosponsivity.

Sigmund Freud and Scientific Description

In September of 1895, Sigmund Freud began drafting a so-called *Project for a Scientific Psychology* that his friend and colleague, Wilhelm Fliess, had pressed him to write (Masson, 1985, p. 139). Fliess wanted Freud to explain human behavior in terms of the constancy or conservation of energy principle. Freud tried his best to comply with such Newtonian scientific aspirations, actually beginning the *Project* with this brief paragraph:

> The intention [of the *Project*] is to furnish a psychology that shall be a natural science: that is, to represent psychical processes as quantitatively determinate states of specifiable material particles, thus making those processes perspicuous and free from contradiction. Two principal ideas are involved: (1) What distinguishes activity from rest is to be regarded as Q, . . . subject to the general laws of motion. (2) The neurones . . . are to be taken as the material particles. (Freud, 1895/1966, p. 295)

In October of 1895 Freud sent a rough draft of the opening sections of the *Project* to Fliess, who fortunately saved this copy so that we have it to study

today. Freud burned his copy, believing that this was a premature, poorly thought-out effort. In fact, in November of 1895 he could say to Fliess in a letter "I no longer understand the state of mind in which I hatched the psychology [i.e., the *Project*]; cannot conceive how I could have inflicted it on you . . . . [T]o me it appears to have been a kind of madness" (Masson, 1985, p. 152).

What was the problem here? It is my belief that Freud had come up against the same problem that all those psychologists experience, who, like myself, want to explain behavior in a teleological manner. We lack an acceptable technical terminology to express our views. By "teleological" I mean an explanation relying upon what Aristotle called *final causation*, which captures the reason "for the sake of which" things exist or actions take place. Teleologies frame concepts of purpose and intention. The organizing scheme, the "that" for the sake of which an intention is carried out, Aristotle named the *formal cause* — as in the patterned essence of an action, the ultimate "why" of an event. Telic organisms behave for meaningful reasons, employing strategically selected "ends" which they want or "wish" to bring about — even though such ends may be mutually exclusive or self-contradictory (*telos*=end). Freud was much taken by the dynamics of human wishes, unconsciously selected and "cathected" ends, compromised solutions of contradictory intentions, and so on. Such peculiarly human dynamics do not lend themselves to a mechanical explanation based on the conservation of "blind" energies, working themselves to a homeostatic point of balance — as is called for by the constancy principle.

Mechanical organisms "work" according to what Aristotle called material and efficient causation. Freud's opening sentences of the *Project* reflect his desire to be scientifically "correct" in basing behavior exclusively on a measure of energy (Q) — which is an impetus conception that Aristotle called *efficient causation*, as in the transmission of force when one billiard ball bumps into another. Freud also postulated a physical structure called the "neuron," which in Aristotelian terms is the *material cause* — a substance that makes up or constitutes the item under description.

Unfortunately, Freud found that he was unable to explain what he wanted to explain within the strictures of material and efficient causation. In so-called "natural" science, these are the only causes on which explanations are to be based. The word explanation (or, "to explain") devolves from the Latin word *planare*, which means to flatten or make things level. Freud could not bring his concepts of wish, compromise, defense, censor, and so on down to the "level" of the material- and efficient-cause meanings. He needed formal- and final-cause meanings to explain what he felt needed explaining. There is little doubt that he wanted to bring psychoanalysis into the realm of traditional "natural science" explanation. But it is just not possible to "say" some-

thing in material- and efficient-cause terms and mean by this what is conveyed when we use formal and final causation to explain things.

There are, of course, interpreters of Freud who believe that he was fundamentally biological in outlook (e.g., Sulloway, 1979). But I think it is noteworthy that the opening paragraph of the *Project* — a manuscript Freud wanted destroyed! — is the only place in some two dozen volumes of his analytical writings that we find Freud openly planning to use material and efficient causation to make his case. It is noteworthy that he could not make this plan "work." Whether he wanted to be or not, Freud was a *teleological* theorist. So were the other two major analysts of history, Jung and Adler. Freud seems to have been the most traditional of the three "founding fathers" of psychoanalysis. What he eventually did was to concoct his notoriously ineffective libido theory, a formulation that gives psychoanalysis the "sound" of a biological reduction to underlying material and efficient causes while actually playing the role of an instrumental energy, sent hither and yon by the (formal/final-cause) *intentions* of the ego, id, and superego.

I won't go into the detailed reasons why final causation was jettisoned in traditional Newtonian "natural" science. It has to do with Galileo, the Inquisition, Sir Francis Bacon's criticism of Aristotle's uses of causation, and a number of other factors (see Rychlak, 1988, especially chapters 1 and 2). Suffice to say that by the time Freud came on the historical scene teleology had been drummed out of scientific description. Natural scientists were not supposed to say why natural events occurred — explain their purposes!— but merely describe how they occurred. This style of explanation was brought into psychology as well. It is epitomized in the widely used concept of the "mechanism" in psychological theorizing.

The "Mechanism" Concept in Psychology

I cannot think of a word in the psychological lexicon that is more widely used and yet more poorly understood than "mechanism." Psychologists routinely talk about "finding" or "studying" this or that cognitive mechanism. Freud spoke of the adjustment mechanisms, but there is nothing mechanical about a reaction formation, a projection, or a repression. To understand these dynamic machinations we must subsume their meanings — openly or covertly! — by the formal- and final-cause conceptions.

If we now turn to sources of definition, we read in one philosophical dictionary that mechanism is the "Theory of total explanation by [an] efficient, as opposed to [a] final, cause" (Runes, 1960, p. 194). In another we read that mechanical explanation is "any explanation which avoids teleology and final causation . . . . [M]echanical explanations stress efficient causation and are reducible to laws covering instances of matter in motion" (Reese, 1980,

p. 345). The "matter" that is moving would, of course, represent material causation. Since machines can be shown to follow a blueprint pattern, it also is possible to think of the formal cause in speaking of a mechanism, but this is a secondary consideration. In no case would a mechanism "work" on the basis of the intentions, purposes, or reasons that final causation defines into existence.

Despite the unequivocal fact that mechanism as classically conceived is without such telic capacities, psychologists act as if their job is to discover such mechanical processes underlying intentions. I have a running argument with a friendly colleague who does excellent research to support a concept of human agency or "free will," because he insists upon speaking of the mechanisms that bring such agency about. This seems to me a contradiction in terms. Human beings have mechanisms functioning in the physical reflexes of their bodies, to be sure. But to think of the framing of intentions and purposes in a mechanistic or cybernetic fashion strikes me as totally off the mark. I think the confusion arises over the confounding of "automatic" with "mechanical." When we reason or "cognize" we extend meanings logically from assumptions that predicate our line of thought in a determinate, automatic fashion.

The classical syllogism captures the logic here about as well as anything. But the flow of meanings in a syllogism from premises to conclusion, although automatic, is *not* mechanical! The premises do not "push" reasoning along in efficient-cause fashion, to arrive at a conclusion. The logical necessity here is based on an *immediate* patterning of one meaning by another — a sequacious or "slavishly compliant" patterning that takes place instantaneously once the syllogistic elements are aligned, without reliance on efficient causation. The patterned alignment (a *formal cause*) of meanings achieved by the person who reasons "for the sake of" these meanings (a *final cause*) is totally different from a mechanical process.

Psychology, which early embraced British Associationism (including Newtonian mechanism), was never to have a final-cause concept on which to base a teleological explanation like the efficient-cause concepts of *stimulus–response* or *input–output*. This was Freud's dilemma, and it remains my dilemma in the present. If I speak of behavior as equivalent to responses, I am immediately trapped by the causation implied because responses are efficiently caused by stimuli! If I speak of behavior as input, stored, retrieved and output, I am also trapped by the efficient causation to be seen in the electrical impulses (akin to Freud's Q) of the cybernetic machine.

After several years of trying to "smoke over" my teleological explanations using the efficient-cause lingo of psychology, I decided that I would never be any more successful here than Freud was successful in his clumsy libido theory. If an efficient-cause concept predicates your account, even though it is used

analogically, you wind up with efficient causation in your account. Simple as that. So, I took the bull by the horns and introduced some new terminology designed to capture what I really wanted to say about human behavior. I began to speak of behavior as "telosponsive" rather than "responsive." This takes me to my recommended innovation to the psychological lexicon.

Telosponsivity

The concept I coined combines the meaning of the Greek word for "end" (*telos*) with the Roman word (*spondere*) that means "to make or do." So, to telospond is to make or do something for the sake of a reason or end. A more technical rendering is as follows: a telosponse is the affirmation or taking of a position regarding a meaningful content (image[s], word[s], judgmental comparison[s], etc.) relating to a referent acting as a purpose for the sake of which behavior is then intended (see Rychlak, 1988, in press).

It is not considered proper etymological form to cross Greek and Roman roots, as I have done here. One of my colleagues once called this a "bastard" term. All I can offer in defense is that I tried many different terms, but this seemed the most direct contrast to the word I am trying to oppose — that is, "response." I say that we do not *respond* to the door stimulus as we leave the room, but rather we *telospond*, in framing this sensory pattern as "that (reason) for the sake of which" we stroll toward the presumed exit — with even longer-term intentions in mind, such as meeting our next appointment or sitting down to a meal.

Telosponsivity shifts the focus of meaning from behavior as occurring reactively to a proactive formulation, from looking "at" the actor extraspectively to looking "with" the actor introspectively. When we affirm or take a position in ongoing behavior the meaning so aligned serves as a *precedent* which then extends *sequaciously* into ongoing action. A precedent meaning is one that goes before others in logical order or arrangement and thereby sets the tone, frame of reference or context of the meaning-extension to follow. A sequacious meaning-extension is one that is slavishly compliant upon the meaning that has gone before it as precedent. A sequacious extension of meaning is entirely determined — *not* in an efficient-cause manner, but in the formal/final-cause manner of logical necessity. The precedent–sequacious flow of meaning can be referred to as a *psychic determinism*, which is what Freud was really trying to account for when he postulated the libido theory. If he had had a concept like telosponsivity to use he would not have needed to cook-up the pseudo-efficient-cause determinism represented by libido.

Precedents thus act like causes, and sequacious extensions are the effects of these causes. What propels this cause–effect tandem? I suggest that this meaning-extension occurs through the logic of tautology, on the order of *If A*

then A (i.e., *If "A-like" precedents then "A-like" sequacious extensions*). If we view the world through rose colored glasses (precedent) then the world is rosy (sequacious extension). If we have a certain schema (precedent) in a given situation, then we enact the meaning being schematically framed (as a sequacious extension). Much of human cognition is based on analogical meaning-extensions. It is often overlooked that analogizing or using metaphors to frame what is under conceptualization relies upon a partial tautology. Thus, a tautology is a meaningful relation of identity between items (a rose *is* a rose), but an analogy or metaphor is a partial identity between cognized referents (a rose *is like* a gardenia). There is always the disanalogy— the non-identity, the mismatch — to consider, which plays an important role in meaning-extension.

This brings me to two other concepts that fill-out the meaning of telosponsivity: *predication* and *oppositionality*. Precedent meanings are never simply identical to the target to which they are extending meaning. When we say "All human beings are mortal" in the major premise of the syllogism, the precedent here is "mortality," for it lends its meaning as a predication of the targeted item "human being." But, there are other mortal beings besides human beings to consider. In other words, the predication is always broader than the target to which its meaning is being sequaciously extended. We could even diagram the relationship here by use of Euler circles. The larger or broader realm of meaning would be symbolized with a large circle labeled "mortal beings." Within this larger circle we would have smaller circles, one labeled "human beings" and others labeled "insects," "birds," and so on.

I do not believe that this process of meaning-extension is carried by the words used in conveying ideas. Predication is a process that telosponsivity relies on. We can frame two predications, having different meanings, by simply rotating words from the target or subject location of a sentence to the predicate location of this sentence — as in saying "A person is like a tree" or "A tree is like a person." Either meaning — person or tree — can occupy the predicating location, lending its meaning to the other word serving as target (or "subject"). But since other targets can be included ("An ant is like a tree"), the predicating context is always broader than the target.

As a teleological theorist I want to explain how it is that people are somehow free of unidirectional control by their environment or even the physical mechanisms of their body. How does a predicational model help me here? It helps because as we analyze the predicational process in more detail it soon becomes apparent that oppositionality is intrinsic to it. There is always *both* the inside and the outside of the framing or predicating circle to consider. Even as I affirm a major premise like "All human beings are mortal" I have a sense of the "non-mortal," the negation of the predicated meaning that I am

extending to the target. I might accept or reject these negations of mortality; that is, I might accept that a non-mortal human such as Christ once existed; or, I might reject this claim. But the point is, as a predicating organism I reason oppositionally or "dialectically" as it has often been called.

It is this intrinsic tie of oppositionality to predication that forces the person continually to "take a position" when a predicate meaning is affirmed. I have shown in my writings that whereas computers follow a Boolean form of hard disjunction, so that they never are cognizant of the negation, contradiction, or contrariety of the so-called information that they process, human beings rely upon a non-Boolean, soft disjunction in which they draw upon meanings that are *not* affirmed, that lie outside the Euler circles of their premises (Rychlak, 1991, in press). Here again, Freud was intensely drawn to such shadow-meanings — as was Jung, who actually referred to them as such.

I would like to say that I am not just "philosophizing" here. I have conducted empirical studies in which it has been possible to demonstrate a predication "effect" in human cognition (Rychlak and Rychlak, 1991). Cueing college students with the predicate-word meanings of unrecalled sentences is more facilitative of recall than cueing them with subject–word meanings. Affective predications of words are already known by a learner before he or she learns the precise words under memorization. And predication has been found to influence learning at both encoding and retrieval. All of these findings and more are presented in my forthcoming book on logical learning theory (Rychlak, in press).

In closing, I would like to express the hope that psychology will move beyond the mechanistic conceptions of the 20th century to a more ecologically accurate, *teleological* representation of the human being in the 21st century. I am not so expansive as to believe that my precise terminology will be adopted, but I am convinced that something of the sort is inevitable.

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