

Out of Nowhere

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Jim Holmes' tutorial was described in the program as “a light-hearted tour through 30 years of Descriptive Psychology”. Think of this afternoon's presentation as a light-hearted tour through half a dozen Descriptive concepts, old and new. In order to give it some kind of shape, I've organized it around a single question having to do with thoughts. That question will guide us as we go through and encounter various phenomena and concepts, and we will eventually answer that question.

[Topic Outline]

1.0 Phenomenon of interest is thoughts that cross my mind, as against A, B, C, D.

2.0 My thoughts seem to come *to* me and they seem to “come from nowhere”.

3.0 “Come from nowhere” is unsatisfactory. So is “come from somewhere.”

4.0 “Come from nowhere” is necessary.

5.0 The question is *not*, what explains why we have the thoughts we have.

6.0 Another feature of my thoughts: they also seem to come *from* me.

7.0 Review of A-O-C and extension via PCF

8.0 Two questions about A-O-C per se Communication among A-O-C

I have to know what I do ahead of time or I can't do it on purpose.

9.0 Language and Concepts

10.0 How can I know what I do without thinking or talking about it?

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11.0 “Reading Off the Features”: Facts in my world are immediately available.

12.0 How do I select which facts to act on?

13.0 A-O-C and world reconstruction

14.0 Review of dreaming and world reconstruction

15.0 Deliberate Action as drama

16.0 Casting and status assigning

17.0 Status assigning and social practices

18.0 Drama as a vehicle for world reconstruction

19.0 How does it happen that only some A-O-C activities appear as thoughts?

20.0 How does it happen that I have any thoughts at all?

21.0 Why do thoughts “come from nowhere”?

22.0 (Optional) Where did *that* come from?

1.0 Now the question is about thoughts, and I got onto it at the very end of last year’s conference. I’m not sure what the conversation exactly was like, but either I or the person I was talking to commented that “Thoughts seem to come from nowhere.” We went round and round on that for about five minutes and got no closure on it, and then we noticed something else: Thoughts seem to come to us. Even though they are our thoughts, we experience them as coming *to* us rather than coming from us. And that’s certainly a little bit strange. So we begin with these two features of thoughts – that they seem to come to us rather than from us, and that they seem to come from nowhere.

Now a little bit of parsing and clarification. When I say, “They seem to come from nowhere”, I mean that one moment they’re not there, and the next moment they are. When you have a thought, that’s the way it works. One moment it’s not there, the next moment it is there, fully formed. Secondly, the kind of thought of which this is true is one of several phenomena that we call thoughts, so I want to distinguish this kind

of thought from four other kinds, and that's why your handout says "A, B, C, D". There are four other kinds of things that I want to distinguish this from.

The kind of thought I have in mind is the kind that crosses your mind, the kind that occurs to you at a given time and place and then is gone. Now the first thing that contrasts with is thoughts that are essentially equivalent to beliefs. If I say "I think that Kilimanjaro is in Africa", I've used the word "think", but I could just as easily have said "believe". That's not the kind of thought I want to deal with here. I don't want to deal with thoughts that are beliefs.

Secondly, thoughts that I have when I'm working on a problem. This is probably the most familiar context for psychologists talking about thinking, i.e. problem solving. I don't want to deal explicitly with those thoughts, although I have a strong suspicion that those thoughts in the end are going to be no different from the thoughts that I will deal with, that they are not inherently different. I also don't want to deal with internal conversations. It's easy to talk to yourself, and talking to yourself in your head is so little different from talking to yourself overtly that it doesn't have that much interest for our topic.

So what we're concerned with are the thoughts that cross your mind on a given occasion and are gone. Examples of such thoughts are: I'm sitting in a meeting and after I've been there almost an hour, the thought crosses my mind, "Is it time?" Or somebody gets up, has breakfast with a friend, comes home and starts doing housework, a little of this, a little of that, enjoying it, and the thought crosses her mind, "This is a good day." Those are the kind of thoughts I want to talk about.

2.0 There is obviously something fishy about the notion that thoughts come from nowhere. The obviousness shows in the fact that nobody wants to leave that one alone. One of the things people do is to think up and invent places for thoughts to come from. The kinds of places that people have thought of are not going to surprise you. "They come

from God.” “They come from the Unconscious.” “They come from my Brain.” These are probably the three most popular genres.

Notice that all of these are transcendental. The mark of a transcendental principle is that there is an implicit introductory clause that says, “No matter how it seems to us...” “No matter how it seems to us, our thoughts come from God.” “No matter how it seems to us, our thoughts come from our Unconscious.” As a general principle, be wary of transcendental explanations. The reason is that there is no way to find out if they’re true or not.

3.0 Being dissatisfied with the idea that thoughts come from nowhere is not unreasonable, and it probably reflects an intuition – a very classic intuition – that says, “From nothing, nothing comes.” That goes back to the Greeks. “From nothing, nothing comes.” That puts pressure on you. If that’s the case and thoughts come, then they can’t come from nowhere. They’ve got to come from somewhere.

You can encapsulate a lot of this stuff into a model that I think is probably due to Irving Goffman. It’s the Onstage-Backstage model. This is the model that I had in mind when I said, “One moment it’s not there and the next moment it is there, *fully formed*.”

Now follow this reasoning: That thought is a complex construction because it is clearly the product of a syntactic system. It clearly has the structure of an English sentence, so it’s not just something that you pluck out of nowhere. It’s got to somehow have been processed in an English language way. Now because it’s a complex construction, there must have been a complex process of construction. You don’t do complicated things in simple ways. Because we don’t observe that process, it must take place somewhere else where we can’t observe it. And only after it’s completed, only after that thought is fully formed, then it moves Onstage where it can be viewed by an audience of one. The various theories about where thoughts come from, you can think of them as simply theories about what is the nature of Backstage. You can clearly have different answers as

to what the nature of Backstage is.

Now if Lewis Carroll were here, he might very well say: “You know, Nowhere must be a pretty busy place because all thoughts come from there.” [laughter] Which is to say that, although it’s natural to resist the notion that thoughts come from nowhere and to suggest places for them to come from, there’s something wrong with that.

If we take seriously the idea that thoughts come from somewhere, two main questions arise, both of which are highly problematical. Number one is the one I’ve mentioned, “What are the candidates for where thoughts could come from?” I would suggest that none of those candidates are particularly plausible.

It gets even worse if you say, “How does it get from there to here? If it comes from any of these places, what’s the pathway? How does it get from there to here?” If you follow that, you say, “Is there any assurance that it gets to the right place?” [laughter]

Q: Could I have *your* thought? [laughter]

PGO: Yeah. If the thought that was supposed to wind up in Tony’s head winds up in mine, is it really still his? Or is it mine? Or whose is it? You can see you can have a lot of fun.

Q: And explain a lot.

PGO: Sure. A lot more than you wanted. The question of “What’s the pathway?” is even worse because there are no candidates. Nobody has ever described such a path.

4.0 Now just to simplify matters, there’s also a counter argument to the supposition that my thoughts come from somewhere else. The argument is simple and it’s this: No matter where a thought comes from, transcendental or otherwise, if it doesn’t come from me, it’s not *my* thought. And yet we’re talking about *my* thoughts. If it came from anywhere else, then it wouldn’t be my thought. I would just be the vehicle for its trans-

mission, the way a CD player is. I would not be the author of that thought. So the simple conclusion is that my thoughts don't and can't come from anywhere else except me. And so you might say if I'm going to have any thoughts at all, they've got to "come from nowhere". Because if they come from anywhere else but nowhere, they're not mine.

So the conclusion is, however puzzling it might be substantively, coming from nowhere is merely the formal mark of the fact that *my* thoughts *originate* with *me*. What could be more simple? My thoughts originate with me.

5.0 I've gone through this argument with a number of people, and it will probably surprise you what the primary reaction is. The primary reaction is "Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. But you're shooting a fly with a cannon here. Saying 'Where do my thoughts come from?' is just an innocent metaphor. It's a way of asking, 'What accounts for why we have the particular thoughts we do?' It's not really a question of where they come from."

Now, it's true that if I say something and then you say in that special tone of voice, "Where did *that* come from?" yeah, I would take it as an inquiry as to how come I said what I said. So one can't reject that suggestion out of hand, but one can reject it quickly.

First off, if the question is, "Why do we have the particular thoughts that we do?" one answer is that we already have a perfectly good system for giving answers of that sort. For example,

- (1) The reason I thought, "I've got to go to the store" is that I was getting hungry and I needed some potatoes to make dinner with.
- (2) The reason he thought, "I'll invest in the Swiss Francs" is that the opportunity arose and he thought it was a sure thing.
- (3) The reason she thought, "I've got to get out of this job" is that the work she was assigned just wasn't challenging

enough.

(4) The reason she thought, “This is a good day” is that nothing but good things had happened that day and that was unusual.

Now, aren’t those the kind of explanations we do give for thoughts of those sorts? So we already have a system for answering questions about why we have the particular thoughts that we do. And since we do, why bring in some transcendental theory to do that job?

Let me here introduce you to what will I think become a new Descriptive concept, namely the Weather Prediction Problem. As you all know, predicting the weather is a problem. Predicting local weather is a problem. Predicting weather long range is a problem. Predicting weather any way you look at it is a problem. Now you face the same sort of issue when you try to push the question of “Why did he have that thought?” Your first cut at it is the kind of explanation I’ve given. But you can always raise more questions: “Why did he have it now?” “Why didn’t he have this other thought instead?” And there are answers to those two. But in general what you will find if you push it just a little, is that there is so much particularity involved, that we’re never going to get the answer. We’ll never know. The more you push it, the more you’re asking for an impossibly precise answer. And that’s exactly what you find with weather prediction, and that’s why I call it in general the Weather Prediction Problem.

Next, on the issue, any explanations of why I have the thoughts I have, is beside the point. Whatever that explanation might be, it doesn’t address the issue at hand, which is one moment it’s not there and the next moment it is there. That issue is not at all touched by explanations for why I have the thoughts I have. That’s the issue we’re pursuing, so that question is simply irrelevant.

6.0 Now let’s enrich the mixture. I mentioned two features of thoughts. One is that they “come from nowhere”. The other is that they

seem to come *to* me rather than from me. The third feature is that my experience of a thought is generally of a voice voicing that thought, and it's my voice. In this respect the thought does seem to come from me. So now we have a situation where the thought both seems to come *from* me in one respect and seems to come *to* me in another respect.

$${}_P R_M \quad {}_P R_P$$

What sense do we make of the notion that the thought comes from me to me? Well, we could go into a five-minute discussion of reflexive relations. Let's do it in two minutes. [writing on board]

Take a two-place relationship, call it R, that holds between P and M. R is a reflexive relation if this is possible [pointing to R on the right], if you can have a case of P having the relation R to P. Most of these cases are straightforward; either you can or you can't. If R is "shaves", then it is reflexive because you can have "P shaves P." On the other hand, if R is "taller than", then it's not reflexive because you cannot have "P is taller than P."

Now, how's this for an intermediate case: "P tells M that Q is the case." Then try it "P tells P that Q is the case." Well, it's intermediate because it's clearly not illogical. It's not a contradiction. On the other hand, what sense does it make for somebody to tell himself that something is the case? If he knows it in order to tell himself that, then he doesn't need to hear it from himself in order to know it. What all of that suggests is that you're not just dealing with a reflexive relation. You're dealing with something substantive here.

Now we have one of our \$64 questions: Where in the domain of human behavior do you have a phenomenon of the sort that we've described, where P tells P that something is the case? Where do you have a phenomenon where you have a message from me to me? When you put it that way, they're not very many candidates, are there?

Q: I keep a calendar or notebook. That's a message from me to me.

PGO: Remember we're talking about thoughts here.

Q: I thought you wanted a message.

PGO: I do. Thoughts are like that. If I say, "It's a good day today", that's a message.

Q: When we're trying to convince ourselves?

PGO: Right. But notice now that that falls within one of the cases that I said I wasn't going to deal with, namely talking to yourself.

Q: I suspect reassurance falls in the case of talking to yourself, but dreaming has some of the qualities of...

PGO: Which?

Q: Dreaming.

PGO: Yeah, but it doesn't have enough of a message quality.

Q: For some people it has a message quality.

PGO: Think generally, not special cases.

Q: Hallucinations?

PGO: That doesn't have enough message quality either. A hallucination can be anything.

Q: How about pain? I stub my toe. Is that a message from me to me?

PGO: No. That's not a message from you to you.

Q: When you bring something to mind?

PGO: Which?

Q: When you bring something to mind, like when something... There's a big difference between what you know and what you have in mind at any given time. And ... bringing it back could be a message from you to you.

PGO: I'm not sure I got that.

Q: Well, it would be in your #3, problem-solving. You'll be thinking about something and you won't be getting anywhere and then you'll remember something. It will come to mind when you need it. That would be the message.

PGO: Could be. I think that qualitatively it fits. It's not representative of the general run of these things. One of the things is we're looking for the generality. I'm interested in what happens with people day-to-day, everyday, usually, not in very special phenomena. I'm looking for general principles, general phenomena.

Q: How about if I'm reluctant to see something?

PGO: That's background. What would the message be?

Q: [inaudible]

Q: Noticing you're thirsty?

PGO: You shouldn't have said that. [taking a drink] It's a good message from you to me. [laughter]

Q: Recalling something?

PGO: It might be, except that would probably be talking to yourself also.

Q: [inaudible]

PGO: An affirmation?

Q: [inaudible]

PGO: That's either talking to yourself or talking to somebody else.

Q: How about self-critic?

PGO: Self-critic. That's a good one. Now that we've gotten that far, let's go the rest of the way: Actor-Observer-Critic.

Q: You all know how sometimes that you don't really know what you're talking about until you can tell someone else who can figure it

out. Would this be an internal version of ... in order to know what you're really saying. That's related to the self-critic function.

PGO: It's also one of those exceptional phenomena.

Q: ... in the grocery store, getting various items that I need for a complicated recipe... but I didn't know it until I saw the ingredient... A recognition...

PGO: That doesn't have enough of a dual message quality. Notice that Actor-Observer-Critic fits what I said. It's a very general phenomena, something you're doing day in, day out, all the time. Because remember, thoughts not only come from nowhere. They come any time, any place. So they can't be something that only comes when you're doing something special or when something special is happening. It's got to be part of your normal, everyday apparatus.

Q: If self-criticism is one of those, wouldn't it be subsumed under simply world observation and analysis, such that...

PGO: Well, it may work out that way in the long run, as you'll see.

Q: I'm sorry. I couldn't hear.

PGO: It may work out that way in the long run, as you'll see. Okay. Let's move ahead with this.

7.0 Part of the enterprise, I don't know if I explained, was to clean up some of the concepts, clean up loose ends, tidy them up a bit, so that they can do better the job we've been using them to do all along. Actor-Observer-Critic is one of these. So let's do a quick review of Actor-Observer-Critic.

Number one: Actor, Observer, and Critic are not homunculi. [laughter] What they are is jobs. They're statuses, but generally we describe them and discuss them as jobs. Mastery of these jobs is essential to being a person. That's why these are important.

Now job descriptions: As an Actor, I act. I do my thing. I follow my inclinations. I express myself. I pursue my projects. I do what comes naturally. I am spontaneous, creative, and expressive. All of the things that you've ever heard of that come under the heading of "Be yourself" belong to Actor. If you think that's easy, think twice. Doing a good job of being an Actor is no easier than doing a good job of being an Observer or a Critic.

Q: Why is that?

PGO: Because it requires just as much learning, just as much self-knowledge, just as much general learning, and just as much self-discipline. That's why. How many people do you know who do a bad job of being themselves? It's not something that if you just didn't interfere, you'd do it perfectly. It's not that kind of thing.

Q: There would be no psychologists. [laughter]

PGO: As an Observer-Describer I merely take note of things. That's all I do. I notice. What I notice is how the behavior is going.

Q: How the behavior is going?

PGO: Yeah. As an Actor I act. I do something. As an Observer I notice how that's going.

Q: The critical perspective seems to be slipping in there.

PGO: How?

Q: "How is it going" has a ring of evaluation.

PGO: It may have a ring to it, but it's not necessarily there. [laughter] Just take the how literally. It's got to be going some way or another, and you notice which way it's going.

Now as a Critic, I evaluate how things are going, based on that Observer description. And as a Critic, I do a couple of other things. If things are not going well, I evaluate the situation, including the behavior, in terms of how it has gone wrong and what might be done to improve

matters. Being clinicians, we usually call that a “diagnosis” and “prescription”: what’s wrong and what can you do to fix it. That’s the Critic’s job.

Now these job descriptions are too narrow. Just in the ordinary usage we’ve already begun to slop over the edges fairly substantially, so it’s time to clean up the act. The way we do this is to elaborate this notion of Actor-Observer-Critic, and the way to do that – the way I’ve done it – is with a Paradigm Case Formulation.

Paradigm Case Formulation of Actor-Observer-Critic

I. Paradigm Case

As an Actor I engage in a course of behavior. As an Observer-Describer I notice how the course of behavior is going. As a Critic I evaluate how the behavior is going and (a) if it is going well enough I leave well enough alone, but (b) if it is not going well enough I generate a “diagnosis” and “prescription” for the Actor.

II. Transformations

T1. Change the Actor’s course of behavior to an imagined course of behavior.

T2. Extend the scope of Actor-Observer-Critic beyond the Actor’s behavior.

T3. Change A-O-C functioning from sequential to simultaneous.

So we’ll start with the Paradigm Case, and the Paradigm Case is essentially what I’ve just been through, the narrow Actor-Observer-Critic. It goes like this: “As an Actor I engage in a course of behavior. As an Observer-Describer I notice how the course of behavior is going. As a Critic I evaluate how the behavior is going and (a) if it is going well enough I

leave well enough alone, but (b) if it is not going well enough I generate a diagnosis and prescription for the Actor.”

That’s your Paradigm Case. Now let’s introduce some transformations. Transformation one: “*Change the Actor’s course of behavior to an imagined course of behavior.*” So instead of actually doing it, I simply imagine doing it. Then as an Observer I have to imagine how it’s going to go. Then as a Critic based on the Observer’s description of how it’s going to go, then I have to evaluate that.

Now this is a standard stage in child development. A very young child will do it overtly, pure trial and error more or less. He’ll do it and find out the hard way what works and what doesn’t. After a while he begins to think ahead of time, “If I did this, what then?” And lo and behold, it works almost as well. It works well enough to give him substantially increased behavior potential and keep him alive at the same time. So that’s the general thrust of this first transformation, that you can do it in your head. And you often do. As an adult you do a lot of that.

The second transformation is to “*Extend the scope of Actor-Observer-Critic beyond the Actor’s behavior.*” Remember in the original narrow version, it was all centered on the Actor’s behavior. How is it going? Is it going well enough? What can you do about it? So the second transformation is to get beyond the Actor’s behavior but retain the same apparatus. As an Actor, I extend the notion of my own behavior to something that meshes with other people’s behavior and with the world in various ways. I think in terms of “our” and “their” behavior.

The real increase comes with the Observer. As an Observer, I note *everything*. How things are going, not just how that behavior is going but how anything is going. What goes on – no limit there. How things work. How things usually happen. Noting everything includes noting normative, statistical, law-like, and theoretical generalizations, as well as situations that have nothing in particular to do with me, and historical facts that have no special bearing on my behavior. So this is a tremendous extension in the scope of that Observer and Observer activity. It extends it from my behavior to the whole world.

As a Critic I move beyond evaluating how my behavior is going. I develop my potential for evaluating anything and everything in whatever respect in light of whatever standard. That's pretty broad, too, but notice you're keeping the same apparatus. You're still keeping the Actor-Observer-Critic apparatus.

Okay. The third transformation is "*Change A-O-C functioning from sequential to simultaneous.*" This is pretty much required. Once you have the first two of these, you pretty much have to have the third. One reason for making a point of it is that in the original version, in the narrow version, Actor, Observer, and Critic paradigmatically form a negative feedback loop. You start with Actor, you go to Observer, you go to Critic and back to Actor. That calls for a specific A-O-C *sequence*. Under this generalization, for any given behavior, you still have the A-O-C sequence. But since you're doing a number of things at the same time here, each of the A-O-C jobs becomes a full time job and in general, at any given time, Actor, Observer and Critic activities are being carried out. So they are being carried out simultaneously.

For the rest of the presentation, unless I say differently, when I say A-O-C, I mean this new version with these extensions.

8.0 Now having identified A-O-C as a place to look in connection with thoughts, we do some cleaning up on A-O-C per se. We've just done the first one, which is the Paradigm Case Formulation, but they're a couple of other loose ends, too. One is easy and the other is not easy. The first question has to do with communication. How do Actor, Observer, and Critic communicate with one another? How does Critic communicate with Actor? How does Observer communicate with Critic? Let's deal with that one right now.

This one is easy because either there is no channel of communication and you don't need any, or else there is one and it's the Person. Let me remind you: Actor, Observer, and Critic are jobs, not homunculi, so when we talk about communication among them, it's not like me communicat-

ing with you. You have a Person in the picture who is doing those jobs, and the person knows what the person knows. What the person knows as a Critic he also knows as an Actor and as an Observer. And since he does, there is no problem of how a Critic communicates with an Actor or an Observer. There simply is no problem with communication, because all you have in the picture is one Person who knows all of these things. So as I say, either there is a channel and it's the Person, or you don't need one. Either way works.

Okay. The second issue with Actor-Observer-Critic is that there is an asymmetry. There are a couple of them, but one of them is particularly important. I've described it in another context by saying that Actor is "before the fact" and that Observer and Critic are "after the fact". What I mean by that is that an Observer or a Critic has to wait for the behavior to occur in order either to observe it or evaluate it. In contrast as an Actor, I have to know the behavior ahead of time. I have to know it before the fact.

The reason I do is simple, obvious, and fundamental, namely, I have to know it ahead of time in order to do it on purpose. I have to distinguish it ahead of time in order to do *it* on purpose. And whereas the argument that it has to be that way is pretty clear, it's not nearly as clear how can you do that. How can you know ahead of time what it is you're going to do? How can you know ahead of time with the level of certainty and the degree of generality that we do? And as a matter of fact, there is the question of "How do you know at all?", much less ahead of time.

Answering the question "How do you know ahead of time?" takes some preparation here. Two cautions, two things that it's not going to be: Knowing what I'm going to do ahead of time is not a case of having a thought about it ahead of time. Nor is it like having a description ahead of time.

Notice, by the way, it could have been different, maybe. It might have been that when we do things, we always have the thought of it just before we do it. Over a wide range of behaviors, that's possible. But that isn't our experience of the matter, so we rule it out not on logical grounds but

on empirical grounds. It simply doesn't look that way.

As I said, this is going to require some preparation. One technique on something like this is to first plant the flag. And if we do that here, it comes out sounding like this. "I have the general and specific power, or ability, to select a course of behavior which is multilevel (i.e., has a significance/implementation structure) and which fits an identifying description, D, without that description having figured explicitly in the creation of the behavior."

How's that? Just a flat statement to the effect that I *do* have the power to do that. So I have the power to select a behavior that fits a description, even though the description was not involved in the selection of the behavior. Now I call it "planting the flag" because it's simply a flat statement that the result we want is there, and then you have to back it up. That's partly what's at issue. How do you do this? How do you select a course of behavior that fits a description so that after you've done it, you can describe the behavior, what it was, with no slop – it just fits – and yet you never used that description in generating the behavior?

Q: [inaudible]

PGO: You need some reason to give a description, but in general you can give a description and in general the description fits.

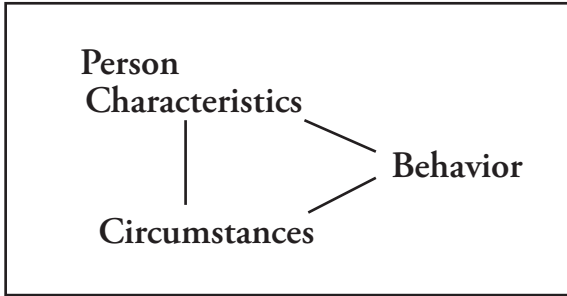
9.0 Okay. Where do we go from there? Where we go is a little closer look into the relation of language and behavior. Given that a description of the behavior is available after the fact, we need an account of *why* the description of the behavior is dispensable in the creation of the behavior. After all, if language is essential to the making of distinctions and if behavior involves the making of distinctions, why isn't there a verbal component to all behavior, or at least to Deliberate Action, which is what we're interested in? That's the kind of question that arises. And the answer is "Not so fast." The relation of language to making distinctions is not that, and it's not a simple one, and it's not just *one* relation. All of which says, "Slow down and let's take it step by step."

The first step is language is not at all necessary for the making of distinctions. You just had it wrong right there from the beginning. All “higher organisms” and perhaps all organisms make distinctions and act on them, yet only one species is known to have a language. There simply is not any kind of general dependency on language for making distinctions and acting on them. A rat does not need to have a language in order to distinguish the red triangle from the blue square and jump to the red triangle. He simply doesn't, and that's demonstrable in any laboratory that has rats. The cat does not need to have a language in order to distinguish the sound of thunder from the sound of wind or rain or to distinguish light from sound, and so on.

What language is essential for is to distinguish *which* distinctions these are. Without language, yes, I can distinguish the red triangle from the blue square all right, but I can't know that that's what I'm doing. I can't know that *what* I'm distinguishing is the red triangle from the blue square, and I also can't know that what I'm doing is *distinguishing* something from something. Now if I can't distinguish doing one thing from doing another, then I also can't do it on purpose.

So these are issues that are “behind the scenes” so to speak or backstage when it comes to Deliberate Action. Without language, I *can* distinguish the red triangle from the blue square and jump to the red triangle, but I can only do it in the presence of the red triangle or the blue square. That is, I can only distinguish them if they are there to be distinguished, whereas with language I can distinguish them anytime, anyplace I want. That's the kind of difference that language makes. That's the kind of relation that language has to behavior and distinctions.

10.0 Let's move on and simply introduce a standard schema of Descriptive. The schema is known as the Person Characteristics-Circumstances (PC-C) Model.



It's a general model for explaining behavior, and it's the model that underlies probably ninety percent of psychological theories. "This Person in this Circumstance would engage in that behavior." If we think of a person just in his normal milieu, doing ordinary things, we can say, "Well, the behavior consists of this person doing what a person like him would do – that is, a person with his characteristics – in light of his circumstances." Like I say, it's a perfectly sound, general model for explaining behavior.

Now Person Characteristics involve one category that's of interest right now, and that's the category of Knowledge. The category of Knowledge as a category of Person Characteristics is defined as "the set of facts or concepts that the person has the ability to act on". This one has been around for a long time, and I would bet that when you hear that or use it, you have something like this in mind: This is a fact which I acquired somewhere, somehow, and I have the ability to act on that fact. This is another fact that I acquired somewhere, somehow, and I have the ability to act on it, and there are some number of these. And the category of Knowledge simply refers to this set.

That's not the way it works. The thing is, we've never said that. All of the formal formulations and presentations involve this, but what nobody has said is that it doesn't work that way. What you have instead of a discreet set of facts, what you have to act on, is a world, not a list of facts. And that world has structure, that world has a lot of disparate things in it.

It has all kinds of facts, all kinds of relationships, all kinds of ambiguity. It's a much more complex thing than simply a set of facts. So from here on in, whenever you're dealing with that particular Person Characteristic, just think "world".

That was a digression. Now back to language. As I was saying, I can learn about red triangles and blue squares and things like that, and about sight and sound and danger and safety and so on. The important thing is that once I've learned about these, in general I will act on them, and with a little practice, I reach the point where I almost always perceive the world and think about the world in those terms.

For example I learn about red, the red triangle, etc. When I see a magazine cover, I see – I *see* – the magazine cover as red. I don't see it some other way and then interpret it as red, or draw conclusions about it and conclude that it is red. I see it as red. So the distinctions that are built into the language, once I've acquired those distinctions and used them, those are the distinctions that then appear in my experience. In some ways you can say, "That's just a consequence of ordinary learning", but I think it's problematic enough so that lots of theorists have had a go-round of one sort or another with the question. I don't know anybody who would deny it these days. There just seems to be general agreement.

Now this is the vehicle – this is the mechanism – as to why when it comes to my behavior, I can see my circumstances in just those terms that I later am able to describe. I engage in a behavior that later I can describe, because all of these are in the language, you might say. All of the behaviors, all of the circumstances, the descriptions of them are in the language, and so those were what I used at the time of the behavior. So later on they're still there. I appeal to them in telling you about the behavior. So the linguistic influence has been there all along creating a background of normative distinctions that I appeal to at the time, during the behavior, afterwards in telling you about it.

Q: You have input in three different ... [inaudible]

PGO: Beforehand, during, and after.

That gives us a kind of answer to “How can I know what I do without thinking about it in advance, without describing it in advance?” And that’s half of what we need to understand. We need to understand how we can know about it. We also need to understand how we can know about it *in advance*. So far we have simply shown how we can know about it.

11.0 Let me introduce now a new... something like an image but not quite. The name of it is

“Reading Off the Features”. The context for that is think of a classroom and think of a philosopher who holds up something like this [holding up a glass] and says, “Now when I say it’s crystal and it’s transparent and it’s round and it’s a glass, what am I doing? Am I hypothesizing? Am I adding something to what’s there? Am I making something up? Or am I just reading off the features of what is actually there?” That’s where “Reading Off the Features” comes from.

Here’s how it works. The first thing that happens is that I acquire some grounds for changing my world. And it doesn’t have to be a spectacular change. It can be a very mundane change. But I acquire some grounds for now taking it to be different from what I took it to be before. And paradigmatically that happens because I hear it from a trusted source. A trusted source is usually a parent, a teacher, some kind of authority figure. So I acquire grounds for changing and *I simply do that*. I simply change it. Since it comes from a trusted source, I don’t question it. I don’t test it. I don’t wait for conclusive evidence or anything like that. Instead, it is simply the case that from there on out, I take it that that is the case. I take it that that’s how things are and I will act accordingly.

For example, suppose that my father tells me, “Wolves are dangerous.” Well, I just make that change. From here on out I take it that wolves are dangerous. No ifs, ands, or buts or questions or tests or whatever. My

world has changed. And if somebody asks me, “Are wolves dangerous?” without hesitation I say, “Yes.” I’ll say “Yes” without having to remember or reconstruct how I found that out or what the evidence is. And if somebody asks me about wolves and I start telling them, it won’t be very far down the line before I say, “Wolves are dangerous.” So on all counts, what has happened is I have simply made the switch in my world. I have simply changed it to conform to the information I got from the trusted source.

Once I have it, it is now part of my world. It now occupies a special niche among all of the rest of the multitude of facts that I’m dealing with. You might say, “How do I access it? How do I access that fact in order to act on it?” Because of the complexity of the world, you would expect that that would be a complicated matter, wouldn’t you? You wouldn’t expect it to be as simple as “He stuck in his thumb and pulled out a plum.” But in fact it’s pretty much that way.

One of the peculiar things about my world: All of the facts in that world are directly and immediately available to me for action, as grounds for action. There is no retrieval. There is no process. It’s all there. If it isn’t there, it’s not part of my world. In effect I simply “read off the features of my world”. That’s how worlds work.

Now as I say, this is extraordinary.

Q: The absence of a process seems a little strange to me, especially since I’m getting to the age where it often takes me several minutes to retrieve the name of a friend I just walked into on the street. It feels as if something is going on.

PGO: It is, but it’s not a retrieval process.

Q: I’m sorry?

PGO: It’s not a retrieval process. What you try to do is put yourself in the frame of mind where it is part of your world and then you don’t have to work at having it available. You don’t go through a retrieval process in the information sense. You don’t go through a process of lo-

cating that information. You simply put yourself in the right headset and if you're lucky, you then remember.

Q: Okay.

Q: It comes to you.

PGO: Yeah. It comes to you.

Q: To push your metaphor a little bit, just because you can “read off the features” here, it doesn't mean that your eyesight is acute enough to be able to see the monogram.

PGO: Also, remember I emphasized how many different things there are in the world as against just a list of facts. Let me read you what I have here. “My real world encompasses logical, causal, empirical, explanatory, historical, human, and spiritual facts, among others. It also offers a multitude of implied facts, intuited facts, inferred facts, suspected facts, forgotten and half-forgotten facts, temporarily unavailable facts, relational facts, relativistic and absolute facts, summary facts, actual and possible facts, past, present and future facts, and so on.” All of that is contained when you speak of “my circumstances” or “my world”. So what you're dealing with is simply one of the complexities. You're dealing with temporarily unavailable facts.

Now as I say, the fact that you “read off the features of your world” is extraordinary, and it tells you something about the logic of person and world and world construction. You don't have that kind of equivalence for nothing. What it tells us is a far cry from the cliches of “Here we stand on a nondescript planet in the midst of billions and billions of galaxies.”

In the past, in emphasizing the radical difference between the notion of Deliberate Action and the usual run of psychological concepts of behavior, I have had occasion to comment that the logical scope of a single Deliberate Action is identical to the logical scope of the entire universe. Briefly, this is because formally the K parameter of a behavior (K for Know) could have as its value a description of the past, present, and fu-

ture history of the universe. You could have such a behavior. So universe and behavior are on a par more or less there. That's what I mean by saying, "This is a far cry from 'Here we stand on this little mud ball in the midst of all of these galaxies.'" Here we're on a par logically.

We get a weak version of that sense when we talk about "acting under the aspect of eternity", which is a well-known turn of phrase in the classic literature. You can approximate that phenomenologically that way.

12.0 Now, one could say that each of my behaviors reflects my entire world and that all of the facts it contains are relevant. It's just that some are more relevant than others. What we commonly *do* say is that the behaviors that I in fact engage in, each involves acting on only a small number of the facts in that world. You don't get anything for free. If you're going to talk that way, then you have to explain "How do I select which facts to act on? How do I pick out which facts in the world I'm going to act on?" if you want to say I only act on some of the facts in that world.

To answer it, it's probably neater and simpler to deal with two cases. The difference is this, the difference between behaviors that are evoked by circumstances and behaviors that come primarily from me.

Case I.

Examples of the first kind, you're very familiar with some of them. The lion walks in the room. I run out the door. That's one of the behaviors that is elicited by circumstances because had the lion not walked in, I would not have done what I did. Let's take that and ask first, "What are the circumstances?" Well, mainly it's the lion coming in the room. That's the circumstance that generates my behavior.

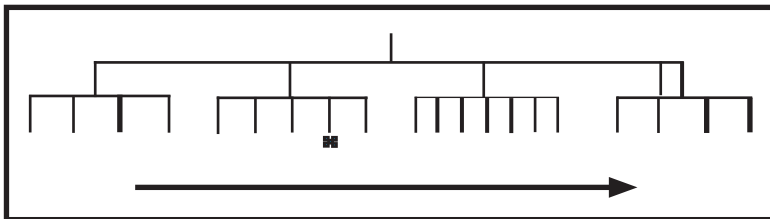
Why do I act on *this* circumstance and not some other? After all, running out the door is no part of any plan I had. How come I pick that circumstance to respond to and respond? The answer is given by a maxim and the maxim says: "A person values some states of affairs over others and acts accordingly."

I value being safe over being in danger and I act accordingly. So when that lion walks in the room, I am sensitive to that kind of fact. I'm sensitive to facts that are relevant to values that I have. I'm always looking at the world in those terms. The term for that is "appraisal". When I meet up with such a fact, the connection you might say is already there. There is that value already in place. The connection is there and that's all it takes. Then the maxim comes into play. I do what I do because I value some states of affairs over others, and I'd rather be safe than in danger so I run out the door.

In summary, in this kind of case the facts that I act on are relevant to a high priority value that I have and to the behaviors that implement such values. Now this is the minor case. Most of my behavior is not of that sort. Most of my behavior is the kind that I would say comes from me. So let's go through that exercise.

Case II.

Recall that to engage in a Deliberate Action is always to participate in a social practice and almost always, if not always, to participate in a larger unit of organized social practices for which the technical term is "Institution". Social practices don't just come one by one. They come organized in various ways, in units of various sizes. So things like farming, education, earning a living, raising a family, etc., are institutions. They are organized sets of social practices. So at any given time what I'm doing is participating in this hierarchy of social practices. One of the things that the hierarchy gives me is a time span. [drawing hierarchy of social practices on board]



In general, social practices and institutions are organized hierarchically. So that if you're doing this, by doing this you're doing this, by doing this you're doing this, and so on up the ladder. That's a significance hierarchy.

But as I said, when you get hierarchies like that, you also have a time thing here [adds arrow at bottom]. So that suppose you knew that I was doing this, and you had all of the possibilities laid out, and you picked out at random the behavior I'm doing *now*. It's going to fall somewhere in here. Say right here [adds x]. What you can say now is that I'm in the middle of something. I'm in the middle of this; I'm in the middle of this; I'm in the middle of this; and I'm right here.

The time aspect is basically what allows me to anticipate at this point, that at a later time I'm going to be doing this. As I move through, either I change and do this one instead, or I rule out more and more of the possible reasons for not doing it. And by the time I get to here, there's no question in my mind of what I'm going to do. So I know ahead of time that I'm going to do this, because that's what the pattern calls for. I'm in effect already doing something that calls for this behavior here.

Notice this is not a matter of *predicting* my behavior. I couldn't tell you five minutes ahead of time what I'm going to do, but by the time it comes time to do it, I can tell you.

Again, there are two angles to this. One is "How do you know?" and that's how you know. The other is "How can you be sure?" Remember philosophers will always ask, "How can you be sure?" In this case we have an answer to them. Mostly the answer is "You can't, damn ya", but in this case we can be sure. To bring that out, let's go back to an old image. And the image is "The Picture of Winston Churchill". It goes like this.

"The Picture of Winston Churchill"

Imagine that I approach you and pull out a glossy 10x12 photograph. I show it to you and I say, "Hey. Who is this a picture of?" You take

one look at it and say, “No mistaking that face. That’s a picture of Winston Churchill.” And I give you a beady eye and I say, “Wait a while. How do you know that this is a picture of Winston Churchill and not of somebody else who looks exactly like this?” That’s pretty reasonable, so you hem and you haw and do this and that but eventually you have to concede that it could be a picture of somebody else who looks just like Winston Churchill. So you say, “Okay. You got me. It could be somebody else.”

Then I take out a piece of paper and some crayons and I say, “How about drawing me a picture of Winston Churchill?” So you sit down there and make your marks and in five minutes you say, “Okay, I’ve got it. Here it is.” And I go through the same schtick with you. I say, “Look. How do you know that what you’ve drawn is a picture of Winston Churchill and not of somebody else who looks exactly like what you’ve drawn?” And this time we go round and round, but finally you get it right. And what you say is, “No. No question about it. I know that this is a picture of Winston Churchill because that’s what I produced it as, and that *makes* it a picture of Winston Churchill. And that’s why there’s no question whatever that that’s what it is.”

In the past in presenting that image, I often as a little additional tidbit say, “This applies to behavior, too.” What makes my behavior the behavior it is, is that that’s what I produced it *as*. That’s the vehicle for being sure. That’s how you can know for sure what your behavior is going to be. Because, since you’re not blindly going through a timeline – you are participating in these – you know what behavior it is that the thing calls for. So by the time you get here [pointing to the x in the hierarchy of social practices on the board], you know that you’re going to do it, and you can be sure that that’s what you’re going to do, because that’s what you’re going to produce it as. And if that’s what you produce it as, then by God that’s what it is.

So now we have an answer to how come as an Actor you can know ahead of time what it is you’re going to do. By the way, if you go back to the first case you still have a structure of practices. It will be a different

structure, but it works the same.

That completes the cleaning up on the A-O-C. Remember we got into it because of the feature of thoughts that they seem to be both from me and to me, and I identified A-O-C as the one place where that sort of thing happens. Then I said A-O-C needs a little cleaning up, and we've done that now. Now we're back to thoughts.

Q: [inaudible]

PGO: How much time are we taking?

Q: [inaudible]

PGO: Well, that's what I was wondering. But I think we've taken up so much time, we might as well just barrel on.

Q: I think there's a groundswell for a break...

PGO: Just a quick show of hands. How many want a break right now?

Q: How much more time do you have?

PGO: I could go on for three hours. [laughter]

Q: Let's take a break.

13.0 Let me anchor us back. Recall that the questions about Actor-Observer-Critic entered our picture because that seemed like the one readily identifiable place where you have this – messages coming *from* me *to* me. That was suggestive because thoughts seemed to have this feature. In fact we have more than a hint in Actor-Observer-Critic. As Walter noticed, I generally *hear* from my Critic. I don't *talk* to my Critic. [laughter] To be sure that suggests that thoughts are generated by A-O-C activities. On the other hand, we may need more than a suggestion and we might want to look around and see what else supports that.

We could ask, "Why would there be any interesting connection be-

tween occurrent thoughts and A-O-C activities?” And the answer in a word is “the world”, that total structure that codifies my behavior potential. That’s the link that holds everything else together. That world is what those thoughts are about. That world or my position in it is what the thoughts are about. That world is the world that I construct, reconstruct, and maintain through my behavior and the corresponding A-O-C activities. So in brief, there is a basis for connecting this notion of thought to A-O-C.

I’m going to skip a sizable section on world reconstruction and just give you a flavor of how it fits into the bigger picture here. To begin with, outside of Descriptive Psychology, reference to world construction, world maintenance, and world reconstruction is not unlikely to meet with a bright smile and a disclaimer, like “You must be speaking metaphorically. *Surely* you don’t mean, *literally*, world construction, maintenance, and reconstruction.” The appropriate answer would be, “No, it’s not a metaphor, and, yes, I mean *literally* world construction, maintenance, and reconstruction.” And then you would get questions along the lines of how could one do that, why would one do that, what guarantees that we’ve done it right, and all the other questions.

When it comes to world reconstruction and these others, we can sometimes use poets as a source of ideas. We seem to have a favorite poet in the Society. That’s our friend the tentmaker who said,

“Ah, love, could you and I with Him conspire
 To change this sorry Scheme of Things entire,
 Would we not shatter it to bits, and then
 Remold it nearer to our hearts’ desire?”

There’s world reconstruction with a vengeance, and it’s what I would call brute force world reconstruction. [laughter]

Now when people look askance when you say, “No, I mean *literally* world construction,” I suspect they’re thinking of something like this. They think that we’re referring to some Godly exercise of power as is

implicit in the poem. As I say, that's a brute force approach, and it is not open to us. We can't "shatter it to bits and then remold it nearer to our hearts' desire". Unless we can. [laughter] I suppose putting a freeway through an industrial area comes closest. [laughter] But you can see that that's not the kind of thing we are going to be interested in.

So the question is "How then? What then? What is this world reconstruction? What mechanism, what procedure, what agency could make it possible?"

There is a general alternative that I want to just call your attention to, and it's introduced here by the quote that I gave last night from Stanley Cavell. Remember he said, "For Aristotle, to speak the truth is to say of what is *that* it is. In this new way of talking, to speak the truth is to say of what is *what* it is." Very briefly, in creating worlds and in reconstructing worlds, we don't do it by creating stuff and moving it around. Rather, what we create is its being what it is.

Q: Will you repeat that?

PGO: Yeah. I say that in creating worlds and in reconstructing worlds, we don't do it by creating stuff and moving the stuff around. Rather, what we create is its being what it is. I seem to recall saying something very similar to that in the *Ex Post Facto* paper some years ago.

The rest of this long section is devoted to expanding on that notion of how through your ordinary behavior you accomplish this reconstruction of "What is this world of mine?", that the reconstruction is along the lines of this saying. You change your view of what it is, and in changing your view of what it is, you change your views of what opportunities it offers and all of the rest. So if we consider that done, we can move on.

Q: Sure, Pete.

PGO: We can move back to the thoughts. One of the end results of that section is that thoughts are verbalized A-O-C activities. That's what they are. Now we pick up...

Q: Did you say that thoughts are verbalized?

PGO: Verbalized A-O-C activities.

Q: Do they have to be verbalized?

PGO: Yeah. Remember the only way you know you have a thought is that you hear your voice saying it.

Q: Could you visualize them?

Q: What?

PGO: No. One of the other things that you want to distinguish the thought from is the experience you have at the time when you have the thought, which is quite different. And the reason that it's important to distinguish them is that there can be a relation between them. You can have the image that serves as the vehicle for the thought, but that same image could serve as the vehicle for any number of different thoughts. That's why the image is not the thought.

To give you an example, suppose I told you that I was thinking about the meeting that I was setting up, and somebody had just told me that a group of people were not coming, and I had an image of one of them looking at me disapprovingly. But I don't tell you that. I said, "It crossed my mind that maybe they misunderstood me." And I say that on the basis of that image. The image was the vehicle for that thought and I know what the thought is. I can translate it. I can say it in English.

Q: [inaudible]

PGO: Hold on. Thoughts not only come from nowhere. They take no time. So the thought couldn't consist of actually saying something because saying something takes time. Whereas an image – you can use an image as a marker for the thought and then say what the thought is. Like I say, you need to distinguish the experience you have when you have a thought from what the thought is.

Q: So is a thought essentially...

PGO: No. Actor-Observer-Critic. You're doing one of those things.

Q: That something is so...

PGO: Yes, but with elaborations. The elaborations appear in the classic philosophical literature under the heading of propositional attitudes. Remember with propositional attitudes, you never have a statement of fact or proposition. You have what they call attitudes toward the same proposition, namely “I hope it happens”, “I wonder if it happens”, “Will it happen?” All of these are variations around the same proposition. Well, all of these variations are also subjects for thought, not just statements of fact. In effect you’re carrying over that piece of language whole. That’s why it’s not just about facts. But it is about the world, because it’s either about the world per se or about my relation to some fact or possible fact, and that’s what the propositional attitudes are.

[Sections 14.0 – 18.0 on the Topic Outline were skipped]

19.0 Now, you start with the notion that thoughts are, in effect, verbalized A-O-C activities. Like I say, you don’t get something for nothing. Every time you make a move that gains you something, you’re always faced with some questions, which you then have to provide answers to or you’re still dangling. Here the question is “How does it happen that only some of these A-O-C activities are verbalized?” It’s a natural question.

Q: Is that saying, “How come it is that you don’t say aloud all of the thoughts that you have?”

PGO: No. “How come we don’t have a separate thought for every A-O-C activity that we engage in?”

At this point I’m going to surprise you and take an empirical approach. [laughter] Somewhere I have a list of actual thoughts. I asked people, “Give me a couple of thoughts that you’ve had in the last day or so,” and I just wrote them down.

Q: For a long time?

PGO: For a couple of days. I had all kinds of strange responses to that question you wouldn't believe. [laughter] And all I wanted was a couple of thoughts.

Q: Yeah, but when *you* ask people that...

PGO: Well, anyhow, I checked those as to whether you could reasonably classify them as reflecting either A or O or C and found that it works out pretty well. That was one of the reasons that I wanted an actual sample. When I looked at the sample, I came up with some generalizations. Here they are.

(1) The A-O-C activities which we experience are those that are closest to being overt behaviors. By that I mean here's an A-O-C activity that you could have done openly as a Deliberate Action, except that apparently something else took priority and you did it covertly. But it could just as well have been an explicit Deliberate Action, and that's the kind that you find a fair amount of.

(2) The A-O-C activities that we experience are those that have high priority. These are the important ones. Surprise, surprise.

(3) The A-O-C activities we experience as thoughts are those that are closely related to the overt behaviors that we do engage in. You think about what you're doing.

(4) Conversely, we also experience as thoughts A-O-C activities which are so unrelated to the overt behaviors being engaged in that they don't interfere with each other. You're all familiar with doing a routine task that is so simple that you can do it and think about something else. You have those cases.

That's all I have. So those, looking at the list, look to be the main kinds of A-O-C activities that get reflected in thought. When you look at that summary, somehow it doesn't look surprising. At the same time,

it's not easy to parse it real neatly. But you can generate a sort of a general model if you will, some kind of picture of what's going on. And it's an economic picture.

You begin with the notion of overt Deliberate Action. That Deliberate Action may be an Actor activity, an Observer activity, or a Critic activity. As soon as we introduce the notion that these are not just sequential, but that you're always doing all three at the same time, we raise the problem of interference. You can't do them all as overt behaviors simultaneously. Something has to give. As soon as you also introduce the notion of doing it overtly and covertly, then you've got a way out, because you can distribute the three among the overt and the covert.

The covert will include... It will include certain kinds of verbal behavior and A-O-C activities and thoughts. All of that is a way of distributing these things so that they don't interfere. And the notion of interfering with each other is the key. That's why I call it an economic model here.

Q: Did you say the lion's share of that activity then is covert?

PGO: Yeah. Two out of three. [laughter]

Interesting enough, verbal behavior shows up again. The reason is that verbal behavior is overt behavior, but it's the kind that you might say would interfere minimally with most other overt behaviors. You can be doing lots of different things and be talking at the same time without undue interference. So now you can spread these things around over three things, namely overt non-verbal, overt verbal, and then covert.

As I say, it's hard to come out with a clean model, but it's easy to see in economic terms. If you approach it in terms of what interferes with what, or what could interfere with what, then you'll see that the kinds of thoughts that occur reflect that kind of consideration. Namely, the thoughts that occur reflect a system in which interference is minimal. Generally speaking, these things don't interfere with each other.

Q: This model can also cover things like inspirations, ideas... How do you account for these ... other than by A-O-C activities that are

going on all the time?

PGO: That sounds like a perfectly good example of the kind of thoughts I'm talking about. "It suddenly occurred to me that..." "It crossed my mind that..."

20.0 The next question is "How does it happen that I have any thoughts at all?" After all, the way I've described them, there doesn't seem to be any necessity. Why would I have any thoughts? It seems like we just do. Probably the best approach to answering that is to answer the question of why thoughts come from nowhere.

21.0 Remember the State of Affairs Transition Rules, the ones that deal with objects, processes, events, and states of affairs. Transition Rule #6 says, "An event is a direct change from one state of affairs to another." Rule #9, I think, is one that says, "The beginning and end of every process is an event."

One of the things I think I skipped, way at the beginning: It isn't just thoughts that come from nowhere. It's judgments, decisions, conclusions, behaviors... Essentially your entire mental life comes from nowhere. It has exactly the same feature as thoughts.

If you look at some of these others – judgments, decisions, conclusions – you say, "Hey. These are achievements." One of the central features of achievements is that they are events. Achievements are events, and events are direct transitions from one state of affairs to another. Guess what? All events come from nowhere. All processes come from nowhere, simply as a result of that logic.

So having a thought both is an achievement, and it marks an achievement of an A-O-C sort. As an achievement, those are events, and as events they come from nowhere.

Q: The events come from nowhere?

PGO: One moment it's not there, the next moment it is, because it's a direct transition from one state of affairs to another. Nothing in between. A process does have something between the beginning and end, but an event has no duration.

Q: But we can see circumstances that give rise to the event...

PGO: Yeah. The important thing is that the nature of events is such that they have no duration so they're going to have this feature. What you have then is your A-O-C activity. Remember what A-O-C is for. It's to make your way in the world. And some of your A-O-C activities mark strategic points where you reach a certain position vis-à-vis the world or some part of it. Those are the ones that are going to be marked by thoughts.

Q: Say that again.

PGO: Those are the ones that are going to be marked by thoughts, when you reach some strategic point vis-à-vis the world.

Q: And of course... [inaudible]

PGO: No, you may not. Think of the one where I'm sitting there and I have the thought, "Is it time yet?" The thought occurred about five minutes before I had to get up and leave. That makes it strategic. I didn't think of it as strategic. I just thought, "Is it time yet?" In effect, even at the thought level, you can operate unreflectively. It's only when you reflect on that that you would say, "Hey. This is strategic."

Q: For that person having that thought, it was not a strategic happening. But in time he might look back, or another person describing it...

PGO: No. For that person it *was* strategic. That's why he had the thought. But he doesn't have to see it as strategic.

Q: So your cry should be, "Trust your thoughts, too." [laughter]

PGO: Somehow I think there's a hidden flaw in that one.

Q: [inaudible]

PGO: No, just some kind of importance. Remember how much ground is covered by A-O-C and all the various kinds of possibilities. That's about as close as you can get with a single description: "Somehow it's strategic." Because there are all kinds of ways of being strategic.

Q: [about advice from a trusted source]

PGO: It all depends. If you get the rest of things right, then having that kind of advice that improves your Critic judgment would improve your behavior. But if other things are not right, then it won't necessarily improve your behavior.

As I said, one of the things about thoughts is not only do they come from nowhere. They go nowhere. One moment they're there, the next moment they're gone. I think we've about reached the point where we want to be gone.