Being, Becoming and Belonging

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ABSTRACT

"Doing" has been the primary intellectual concern of psychologists—including Descriptive Psychologists—in the 20th century, but "doing" is not the only aspect of the Person concept which warrants attention. This paper concerns itself with three domains which have been less extensively articulated within the Descriptive Psychology canon: being, becoming and belonging. Conceptual and practical links are articulated between each domain and the others ("being" informs "belonging" in various ways, and vice versa, for example), to "Person", and to "doing" in its various forms. Some of the material here is already part of the common canon in Descriptive Psychology; the rest is meant to be original contributions by the author.

Introduction

"Doing" has been the primary intellectual concern of psychologists in the 20th century. Indeed, it defines the domain; the standard definition of psychology is "the study of behavior", an acceptably academic term for "doing." Descriptive Psychology set out to make a "fresh start," as Ossorio famously put it in his

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introduction to *"What Actually Happens"* (Ossorio, 1971/1975/1978), but it did so by recognizing and utilizing the power of conceptual articulation, not by changing the subject. Accordingly, "doing" (in its various forms of Intentional Action, Deliberate Action, Social Practices, and so forth) has been a central concern for Descriptive Psychologists since the earliest writings of Ossorio in the early 1960's. In *Persons* a Person is said to be one whose life history "paradigmatically is a life history of Deliberate Action;" person characteristics are all articulated by means of their relation to the person's actions. Thus, Person and Doing were, for Descriptive Psychologists, the initial central, focal concepts and domains of interest. In retrospect, it is clear that this was well-chosen; a great deal of good has come from putting them at the conceptual core.

"Doing," of course, is not the only aspect of the Person concept which warrants attention. Just as "Person" conceptually implies "doing" (it is absurd on the face of it to postulate a paradigm-case Person who never does anything—what kind of Person would *that* be?), "Person" also conceptually implies some other domains. In particular, this paper will concern itself with three domains (aspects of the Person concept, to be technically exact) which have been less extensively articulated within the Descriptive Psychology canon: being, becoming and belonging.

"Less extensively articulated" means just that—being, becoming and belonging have all been part of Descriptive Psychology's conceptual apparatus from the beginning (as aspects of the Person concept they would have to be). It seems fair to say that for the first twenty years or so, the Descriptive Psychology community paid a great deal of attention to persons and doing, and significantly less attention to the aspects of being, becoming and belonging. It also seems fair to note that over the past twenty years or so, a number of Descriptive Psychologists, including Ossorio, have explicitly dealt with and within these domains.

My intention in this paper is to explore each domain—being, becoming and belonging—*as* aspects of the Person concept. As such, we will recognize conceptual and practical links between each domain and the others ("being" informs "belonging" in various ways, and vice versa, for example), to "Person," and to "doing" in its various forms. The entire canon of Descriptive Psychology (at least to the extent it is known to the author) is explicitly assumed and used here; while I mean this paper to effectively stand on its own and be usefully intelligible to non-Descriptive Psychologists, and I will strive for clarity and ease of understanding, it is not my intention to include a basic course in Descriptive Psychology.

The conceptual articulation of these domains within Descriptive Psychology has been largely piecemeal, done as needed for specific topics of interest and often presented only in spoken, undocumented presentations at the Descriptive Psychology Annual Conference. (The present author admits to being undoubtedly the worst offender in that regard—hence this paper, in exchange for numerous

intellectual I.O.U's.) As a result, the origin and development of some of the articulations presented in this paper are at best murky—sorting out exactly who said what, when, would be a difficult and thankless task and one which this paper explicitly does not undertake. Some of the material here has become part of the common canon in Descriptive Psychology. Some items were first articulated by a known individual, written down in a specific document, and then worked their way into wide understanding and acceptance; when the author of such items is known to me, I will acknowledge their authorship. Some items emerged from undocumented presentations or dialogue, were picked up and adapted by others, and then became widely used, perhaps even written down as accepted canon; these I shall simply use and acknowledge as canon. (I ask any Descriptive Psychologist who finds his or her work wrongly attributed here to kindly inform me of my mistake and I will correct it in a running "Errata" attached to this paper.) The rest of the items in this paper are meant to be original contributions by the author, some of long-standing and wide acceptance within the canon ("Coercion elicits resistance," "People become what they are treated as being," and "Conscious *as* ..." come immediately to mind), some new to this paper. My primary concern here is for articulation, not attribution; as The Rubiat puts it so memorably, I prefer to "Take the cash, and let the credit go." (See, in addition, the "Acknowledgments" below.)

Being

A Person is an Individual whose life history is paradigmatically a history of Being.

By "Being," I do not mean mere existence within the scheme of things, nor do I mean fundamentally to distinguish thereby a Person from the dead or the imaginary—"live" and "real" serve quite adequately for those purposes. Rather, I intend the usage of the word "Being" which is active and participative. Just as we say "He lives his life" to point to his active engagement by contrast with passive existence, we can say "After all, she *is* the Mayor" as a means of pointing to one way of understanding her actions, thinking and judgments. *Being* the Mayor (or Bob's friend, the point guard, a plumber, etc.) connects strongly to a large set of actions she takes; indeed, it is not stretching things too far to take "Being the Mayor" in many cases as a meaningful description of what she is doing. Thus, "Being" and "Doing" are strongly connected conceptually and practically. (The obvious parallel of this "life history of Being" formulation with Ossorio's classic "life history of Deliberate Action" formulation is intentional, of course, and is complementary rather than competitive—two views of the same thing, rather than two alternative solutions to the same problem.)

Whenever a Person acts, he acts *as* a particular someone—that is, he is being and enacting a particular status within the status structure available in the community within which he is currently participating. (These linkages will be explored in some depth in "Belonging.") In the paradigm case, his actions are the enactment of a single status, which he knows himself to be, and the enactment of which forms part of his reasons for acting as he does here and now. At times, his actions may be a case of acting on more than one status at a time—indeed, even acting on statuses within different communities at the same time—more or less successfully. (This complexity will be explored in more depth in "Belonging.") Whereas statuses are discrete (in the mathematical, not the social, sense), Being is continuos; while one can cease to enact the status of Banker without immediately taking up the status of third baseman, one cannot routinely cease to *be*. One always remains oneself; when one is not enacting a particular status, one still *is* "me." "Me" is who I "be" during those transitions from one status or community to another—and, of course, while I am enacting all those other statuses as well. (Enacting a status while ceasing to be "me" is possible, but generally problematic; see for example Ossorio, 1997a, pp. 163–193.)

"Being," as in "Being the Mayor," is substantially more than a summary category for a cluster of actual and possible actions. It also refers to what one sees (and does not see), has reason to act on (or to not act on) and how one chooses (or chooses not) to act—among other things. Ossorio articulates many of these aspects of "Being" in his collection of status-dynamic maxims with commentary, *Place*; let us focus for now on that aspect of Being which is both most familiar to us as persons and problematic to us as behavioral scientists: consciousness.

Being and Consciousness

To be a Person is to be conscious.

This is the paradigm case, of course. We recognize states such as sleep and coma in which persons are understood to be not conscious, and by recognizing such, we thereby acknowledge the fact that "not conscious" is an atypical state for persons, calling for an account and perhaps even a remedy. We also, as psychologists, recognize states of affairs of which a person can properly be said to be "unconscious;" steering clear of Sigmund's swamp, we take "unconscious knowledge" to be a variation of the paradigm case, calling for an account whenever attributed.

All of this is straightforward and inarguable. Again, try the thought experiment of imagining one who we would call a person, but of whom we would also say, "Of course, he is not conscious." We would immediately recognize this as a severely limited person. If I took the further step and said, "And this is our paradigm case person" you would (charitably) assume I was joking; after all, if the paradigm case

person is not conscious, how could I expect you or anyone else to know (or care about) what I just said?

A slight digression. As we all know, attributing consciousness to persons is rank heresy in many academic circles these days. In some British circles it is referred to as the "C-word"—a word as unutterably offensive to academic aesthetic sensibilities as the "N-word" is to the moral sense of most contemporary Americans. To vastly understate the issue, this is an unfortunate state of affairs. Let's be clear that by reminding us that persons are conscious, I am in no way implying (nor for that matter denying) the existence of some substance or transcendental entity called "consciousness." That's a matter for theologians. "Consciousness" here refers to the state of affairs of being conscious, nothing more nor less (for a more extensive discussion of this topic, see Jeffrey, 1998).

Granted that a person is conscious, it makes obvious sense to ask, "Couscious *of* what?" This directs our attention to the *content* of consciousness. Answers to that question take the form of identifying the particular objects, processes, events, states-of-affairs, relationships and concepts which the person currently discriminates in her world, and in relation to which she is therefore in a position to act. Less obviously, but equally cogently, it makes sense to ask "Conscious *as* what?," directing our attention to the *context* of consciousness. Answers to this question take the form of identifying a status within the social practices of the individual's community, which the person is currently being, and which bound and influence the contents of consciousness.

To expand a bit: Being a banker, I am conscious *as* a banker. I look for opportunities to do what a banker does; I pay particular attention to those states of affairs of interest to a banker; I appraise and respond to a situation in one of the ways a banker does. As the third baseman on our softball team, I am conscions of a very different set of thiugs because I ain conscious *as* a third baseman—not as a banker. This is an ordinary, everyday fact about persons: what we are conscious *of* depends largely on who we are conscious *as*, and this changes routinely and dramatieally as we change who we "be." (We will expand further on this in the section "Being and Versions.")

Consider the special case of "conscious as" implicit in the classic Descriptive Psychology "Actor-Observer-Critic" schema... "A person has a status in the world as an Actor, as an Observer, and as a Critic." (Status Dynamic Maxim G3, Ossorio, 1982/1998). As such, a person can be conscious *as* an Actor, an Observer and a Critic, and the content of the person's consciousness will surely vary as the status varies. What one knows as an Actor, and indeed how one knows it, is significantly different from what and how one knows as an Observer or Critic. Let us look next at one important aspect of Actor's consciousness—what and how a person knows when being an Actor.

Being and Feeling

"Feeling" has been as close to a dirty word as one can find in Descriptive Psychology. Ossorio assessed the predominance of "feeling talk" as a pernicious influence in both psychology and our culture at large, and undertook a classic well-poisoning operation to undermine its influence. He insisted on the reality basis for emotions as primary, and essentially dismissed feelings with the classic formulation: "Feelings of anger are whatever you feel when you are angry." A great deal of good has come of this move.

Having taken the antidote and effectively recovered from the poison, we are left to wonder if in fact we might discover an important place within Descriptive Psychology for the concept of feelings. In recent years, some Descriptive Psychologists have begun a grass-roots rehabilitation campaign for "feelings," e.g. Jeffrey's formulation of feelings as "the experience of appraisal" (Jeffrey, 1998). I suggest that a proper place for "feelings" as part of the Person concept can be seen as part of the concept of Being—specifically, as Actor's knowledge.

To quote Ossorio:

> "For the Actor, the World is essentially an arena for action, and he treats it accordingly by incorporating it into his actions. Acting as Actor has several distinctive features:
>
> His behavior is spontaneous: he does what comes naturally. ... His behavior is creative rather than reflective. ... His behavior is value-giving rather than value-finding. ... His behavior is a before-the-fact phenomenon, since he creates it (he is not *finding out* what behavior he is engaged in—he is *doing* it.") (Ossorio, 1982/1998, p. 104).
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> Additionally: "But I don't wait for my behavior to find out about it. I have to know about it in advance, in a different way. ... My knowledge of my behavior is an author's knowledge, not an observer's knowledge. And an author's knowledge is ahead of time, not after the fact." (Ossorio, 1997a, p. 145)
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> And finally: " ... it is not surprising that our self-knowledge should have much of the general character of 'feelings,' since the latter both are a critical aspect of person characterizations and, on the performance side, involve skills which can be exercised without requiring deliberation and thus could be continued long past the point where deliberation was no longer possible." (Ossorio, 1966/1995, p. 93).

Being an Actor, then, requires a person to be conscious as one who is spontaneous, creative and knowing what he knows before the fact—an Actor's knowledge is ahead of time. To act, we generally need to know who and where we are, that is, what status we are acting from ("being") and what our place is vis-a-vis other relevant elements in our world—and as Actor, we generally need to know

these things spontaneously and "before the fact" (by contrast with, for example, figuring them out from observation.) Feelings are just that sort of spontaneous, before-the-fact knowledge—we know them directly, not by observation (although of course we can be mistaken, and observation then is a good corrective)—and acting on feelings is a paradigm case of spontaneous, creative, value-giving behavior. Feelings, then, seem on the face of them to be a type of Actor's knowledge.

But what type? I suggest the following simple formulation:

Feelings are Actor's knowledge of relationship.

As such, feelings are also Actor's knowledge of status, or standing vis-a-vis other elements in the World, importantly including other people. How does an Actor know what behavior is called for in this situation? Well, "he does what comes naturally," that is, he does what seems called for, which in many cases is equivalent to, "he does what feels right."

Let me be clear that I am not implying that feelings are the only type of Actor's knowledge, or that all Actors are acting on their feelings, or that feelings are the only way Actors can know relationship accurately. Knowledge is indispensable in all cases of successful action (save those we attribute purely to luck); feelings, an Actor can do without at times (but at a potential cost of spontaneity and flexibility, which we recognize as Actor's deficits.)

That said, the link between feelings and emotions is straightforward. Feelings are Actor's knowledge of relationship; emotions are appraisals of relationship, which is knowledge which carries built-in motivational significance. Many feelings correspond to relationships on which one can act, if one chooses, but there is no built-in motivation to act. We have few words for such feelings because we generally have little need to talk about them—paradigmatically, feelings are acted on, not talked about. Emotions, by contrast, are generally identified with specific words which enable us to compactly articulate both the relationship which exists and the behavior to be expected. (See, however, Ossorio (1997a, p. 120) on why there appear to be many negative emotions but few positive ones.)

Thus, "Feelings of anger are whatever you feel when you are angry" can be seen *not* as a statement of the general dispensability of the concept of feelings, but rather as a part-description, like "the smell of bacon," where that which is being identified (the feelings) "cannot be described independently of a description of the primary context" (the emotion of anger). (Ossorio, 1966/1995, p. 61). (Although of course the feelings can exist independently of the context, as when a stage actor recreates her feelings of anger to give a convincing portrayal despite the lack of any actual provocation.)

Being an Actor requires spontaneous, before-the-fact knowledge, and when it comes to relationship/status/place, feelings are that sort of Actor's knowledge.

Being and Versions

I would like to offer anyone reading this paper a "sucker bet." (It's a sucker bet because, as with Pete's famous "how will we eventually reach the stars" bet with his friend Lowell, neither party will be around to collect on it.) I bet that when intellectual historians of the 22nd century write their accounts of the 20th century, in their chapters on Descriptive Psychology (no bets—that's a gimme) they will assess Ossorio's formulation of the Dramaturgical Model as his most significant contribution. (Ossorio, 1998; Ossorio, In Preparation). One of the Dramaturgical Model's profound strengths is the way in which it helps us make fundamental sense of the inescapable but otherwise inexplicable "clustering" of things in the world. And nowhere does that "clustering" occur both more profoundly and significantly than in "being."

As previously observed, what we are conscious *of* depends largely on who we are conscious *as*, and this changes routinely and dramatically as we change who we "be." This is an ordinary, everyday fact about persons, but one which we routinely fail to take into account. Perhaps because of the continuity of consciousness implicit in being myself (essentially no matter what else I am being), we tend to think of ourselves and other persons as a continuous whole: our skills, knowledge, attitudes, motivations, interests, etc. are thought of as like the ingredients of a well-stocked kitchen, always equally available to us depending on what we happen to be doing. There is a point to conceiving of the whole and complete person in this way, but it misses some essential facts—the "clustering" of person characteristics easily observable in day-to-day life. Jill is an accomplished, compassionate therapist; but when it comes to the disaster area of her personal relationships, it looks as if she forgot where the skill and attitude shelves are in the kitchen. Bob is a gentle, friendly clerk at the health food store; on the touch football field he becomes a loud, hyper-aggressive kamikaze. If this sort of shift in observable person characteristics were not so commonplace, we would suspect Jill and Bob of multiple personality disorder (or whatever we're calling it these days); as it is, we simply take it that we have seen two different *versions* of the same person.

Once pointed out, it is easy to notice that every person comes in many different versions. These versions correspond to statuses (see Ossorio, 1998, p. 122-125), which are what there is to "be." Each version is a cluster of consciousness and person characteristics, including attitudes, skills, etc. which are most fitting to the status being taken. And, as just noted, these person characteristics can be significantly, even startlingly, different as one moves from status to status.

"Versions" gives us a different way of understanding some of the observable complexity of people. The same person can be one way one time, and its opposite another, and this calls for no particular explanation nor remedy since on those two occasions the person is being different statuses. It also suggests some practical approaches to the thorny, age-old problem—how can we get a person to change?

Ossorio once famously remarked about psychotherapy: "People change slowly, and little." That's the bad news about changing people. The good news is, we may not need to change people; we may need only to change the version of the person that shows up. And we do that by changing the status the person is being—either by inviting them into a different status altogether, or by successfully redefining the status they are already being. Since we are dealing with Actors here, this invitation or redefinition needs to take place while the Actor is engaged, not merely through engaging the Observer/Critic. (Much more on this topic in "Becoming.")

Being an Actor, then, means being a particular version of oneself, and these versions can be significantly different from—even contradictory with—each other. Not surprisingly, this state of affairs creates a context for a question of both formal and deeply personal importance: who am I, really?

Being and Authenticity

Authenticity, like consciousness, is tricky conceptual stuff. If you are not very careful, you find yourself postulating the existence of an entity called the "true" or "real" self, which is who you *really* are, and which contrasts with the apparent self which can be observed acting in the world more or less authentically. I mean to neither affirm nor deny the existence of such a "real" self—again that's a matter for theologians and mystics—but as a Descriptive Psychologist I am required to do justice to the facts of "being and authenticity" without making anything up. Let's see if we can do justice to the facts regarding authenticity without making up an entity called the "real self."

What facts need accounting for? Every day, as we go along being and doing in the world, we experience actions ranging from ones that seem straightforwardly an expression of "who I am," to ones where we are just going through the motions and know it. We are interested here in the ones that are *not* an authentic expression of "who I am." "My heart says one thing, but I do another." "My job (school, church, marriage) requires me to act in certain ways, but that's not the real me."

Some of these instances drop out of the picture as soon as we acknowledge that a person can deliberately choose to engage in an action which she knows is not an authentic expression of who she is. These choices are often made on prudential grounds ("Better not burn that bridge just yet"), moral/ethical grounds ("The fact that it's true doesn't outweigh the harm I would cause by saying it") or even hedonic grounds ("Let's just take the easy way this time.") If these choices are inauthentic at all, they are at most "garden variety inauthenticity" and not likely to cause too many sleepless nights so long as they are balanced with a sufficiency of authentic acts.

The difficulties—again both formal and personal—arise when we consider those actions which are not so easily explained. The person appears, both to us and to himself, to be making his best effort, and yet it still seems hollow. He is going through the motions as best he can, but he is clearly not getting the satisfaction that

accompanies straightforward participation. ("Satisfaction accompanies participation" -- see "Belonging.") What's going on?

Again, let's put aside for the moment those instances where we would be inclined to offer a classic psychodynamic explanation: the person is stuck in some past trauma or scenario, and his present behavior is best understood by reference to some portion of his history. Formally, we already have accounts for this type of "inauthentic" behavior; it does not surprise us (although as therapists it of course concerns us) when someone in this situation asks "who am I, really?" (We will return to this "symbolic hangover" in "Becoming").

What we are left with looks a lot like genuine existential dilemma: a person, with no apparent psychodynamic sticking points, who is doing her very best and still coming up empty. What, indeed, is going on?

We need three conceptual pieces to understand this situation:

1. First, let's recall that an individual person, while certainly complex and flexible as previously noted, is nonetheless bounded in specific, individual ways. Joe is really good at some things and not so good at others; Carolyn is tremendously interested in some things and couldn't care less about others; Daniel is driven to achieve certain outcomes and actively opposes others (which happen to be at the top of Mary's all-time To-Do list.) Further, generally over time we come to know ourselves pretty well, and our self-knowledge is Actor's knowledge, that is, direct, spontaneous and differentiated, although not always verbally well-articulated. What we know (Actor's knowledge) about ourselves is considerably more extensive, and indeed may conflict with, what we can say accurately about ourselves (Observer's knowledge.) (There is of course no guarantee that our Actor's knowledge of ourselves is accurate, and again, Observer's knowledge is useful in correcting that sort of mistake.)
2. Second, not all of us are perfectly suited to every status we are called upon to take. Indeed, one of life's major and enduring challenges is finding and being statuses for which our personal characteristics are a good match. Good match or not, we can see (and may well be reminded) that we are called upon to be a spouse, a mother, a mentor, banker, third-baseman, employee or whatever—and we do the best we can. This latter is publicly validated by the community around us, that is, it is Observer's knowledge.
3. Third, recall the above formulation of feeling as "Actor's knowledge of relationship/status/standing." This is knowledge of *actual* relationship/status/standing—where we *really* are—which may or may not contrast importantly with where we are *supposed* to be, that is, with the *nominal* relationship/status/standing we are seen by our community (and ourselves, as Observer) as being.

Putting these together, we can understand authenticity as referring to the situation where a person is well-cast in the status she is being. Who she is and knows herself to be, is a good match for what the status requires her to be; what she

is called upon to do in this status gives her good opportunity to express who she really is; as she "be's" this status, she feels like her "true self" because the version of her this status calls for includes some of her most important personal characteristics.

Inauthenticity can be seen, then, as miscasting. The status he knows (Observer/Critic knowledge) he must be, is a poor match for the status he in fact is being in the world (Actor's knowledge via feeling.) He is called upon to act on personal characteristics he in fact does not have, or which are weak in his overall scheme; the version of him this status calls for includes little of central importance to him. (As the Wizard of Oz said to Dorothy: "I'm not a bad man. I'm a very good man. I'm just a bad wizard.") Small wonder, then that he feels phony or inauthentic or empty (which we might understand as the feeling equivalent of taking the phone off the hook because you already know it's going to be bad news.) One can take only so much of this miscasting before beginning to wonder, "Who am I, really?" because it has been a long time since "I have felt like myself"—that is, "since I have been well-cast in a status where the version of me I was being included important aspects of me, and matched well what the status required me to be."

"Real self," then, is how we refer to a particular state of affairs. A person is his "real self" when who he is at the time (Actor's knowledge of version) is a good match for who he called upon to be by the Status he is currently being (Observer's knowledge). Said slightly differently, we say we are our "real self" when Actor's knowledge of who we are, matches well with Observer's knowledge of who we are. We will consider some implications of this in "Belonging."

It seems we have done justice to the facts about authenticity without resorting to reference to a entity called "the real self." (As often is the case, on closer examination what seems to call for an entity can be better understood as a state of affairs.)

Or have we? After all, not just any match will do—we need some versions that include *important* aspects of who we are. Why are these particular person characteristics centrally important to Mary, but not to Joe? Why does Joe seek and find great satisfaction in this status, which Mary avoids? We will take up this issue further in the next section.

Being and Soul

Many in our culture take soul to be a central fact of existence (the "*real* real self" as it were); many, including most academic behavioral scientists, dismiss it as on a par with ghosts, poltergeists, and other entities "of uncertain status," to borrow Tee Roberts' delightful locution. (Roberts, 1991). Bill Plotkin presented at last year's conference an initial account of his life's work on Soulcraft; until then, it is fair to say that virtually no conceptual work explicitly on "soul" had been done by Descriptive Psychologists. (Although Ossorio has chosen to avoid the word "soul" in his writings, it is clear that his work on the Dramaturgical Model and on

self-concept cover some of the same ground.) Plotkin is a passionate advocate of the central necessity for a concept of soul, the crucial importance of doing one's particular "soulwork," and the utility of various "Soulcraft" methods. He intends in his writings nothing short of a cultural transformation to a "soulcentric" culture. All this comes through in his presentation—clearly, his intentions are greater than merely offering a Descriptive formulation of soul. That said, he is also an astute and committed practitioner of Descriptive Psychology, who means his formulation to be rooted in and a contribution to our shared conceptual discipline.

I personally am greatly impressed with Plotkin's work, and intrigued by his quest. The questions of soul which I wish to address in this section are considerably smaller, and almost exclusively focused on conceptual issues, specifically:

1. What facts suggest a concept of soul?
2. Do we need a concept of soul to account for these facts?
3. What conceptualization gives us formal access to the domain of soul?

I have no intention of competing with, or building upon, Plotkin's work here. I mean to be mindful of his conceptualization while proceeding independently of it. As we shall see, the end points of both approaches turn out to be substantially similar.

What facts suggest a concept of soul? Our literature and folklore are replete with examples of young (and not-so-young) people suddenly "finding themselves": seeing a great performer/ tending to a sick animal/ defending someone from a bully/ hearing a piano played for the first time, and suddenly recognizing: "That's it!" As one popular novel put it: "He knew all at once that this was it; this was what he was born for ..." Less dramatic, but equally cogent, are the many day-to-day instances of self-discovery and self-affirmation, when a person recognizes that, all appearances and expectations to the contrary, they surprisingly fit (or do not fit) in a particular status. "This gives me deep satisfaction; it feels like the real me" as well as "I can fake it, but I just can't be this and still be me."

All these point to the fact that individuals from time to time recognize themselves, in a way that seems to them deep and unmistakable, when they find themselves called upon to be a particular status. The use of locutions such as "what I was born to be ..." "who I really am ..." and "who I was meant to be all along ..." underscore the significance of these recognitions; the fact that the recognition often comes in an unexpected context that is only inevitable in retrospect underscores what Ossorio has referred to as "the essentially mysterious" nature of this kind of self-knowledge. ("By essentially mysterious, I mean that there is no way to find out." Ossorio, 1997b). Further, these recognitions have powerful impact on our view of ourselves in the world; like the classic "face in the wall"(Ossorio, 1971), once seen, they can be ignored only with great difficulty. This "me" which I recognize on these pivotal occasions seems central to my true nature, at the core of my being, an essential aspect of my identity—my "soul," if you will.

These, then, are facts which suggest the need for a concept of soul in Descriptive Psychology. But do we actually need a concept of soul to account for these facts? I suggest that we do. The primary candidates within the Descriptive Psychology conceptual canon for accounting for "soul" facts would be "authenticity," "capacity," and "Identity." As we have noted above "authenticity" overlaps with but does not completely subsume the concept of "soul." "Capacity" looks initially promising, in that it is another of those "essentially mysterious notions," but it seems best reserved for Personal Characteristics, the Observer's parallel to the Actor's self-concept, and knowledge of "soul" is clearly Actor's knowledge. "Identity" again seems clearly to overlap, but not subsume, "soul"—while "soul" may be seen as at the core of my "Identity," clearly not all matters of Identity are also matters of "soul." Thus, it seems we need the concept of "soul" to do justice to the facts of essential self-recognition.

How, then, shall we conceive of "soul" within Descriptive Psychology? Ossorio addressed some aspects of this issue informally during the Rap Session at 1997's conference. His remarks paralleled my own thoughts on the matter. To quote some relevant passages (Ossorio, 1997b):

> "You don't have soul as original capacity. You have the capacity to have a soul, to be somebody with a soul. There's not something called soul that's in your original capacity.
>
> "Self-concept leaves room for my being mistaken about it. Self does not. The self is the real thing about which I have this self-concept. I can be in error about the first, but the second is simply what it is."
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> "When it comes to thinking and talking about yourself, you can either be talking PCs [Person Characteristics] or Identity. I can tell you what characteristics I have, and I am often mistaken about them. Why? Because I have to find out about those the same way everybody else finds out about them, and my life history may be such that I wasn't in optimal circumstances to find out. So I may have characteristics that I don't know about. I may not have characteristics that I think I have because I succeeded in situations that were not representative. On the other hand, the Identity ones have to do with who I am. I may be wrong but not that way. It's a different kind of error, and that would be a more serious one. It would be more closely tied into pathology."

With the above in mind, I would like to offer the following requirements for a concept of "Soul" within Descriptive Psychology:

- "Soul," like "self," does not leave room for my being mistaken about it. Soul is the reality about which I have self-knowledge—about which I may or may not be mistaken.
- "Soul" is related to my Identity—but it is not a part-whole relationship. Soul is not part of my Identity.

- "Soul," like capacity, is essentially mysterious—knowable only to the extent that relevant history has transformed Soul into Identity. (Soul is to essential Identity as Capacity is to Personal Characteristics.)

The choice of the word "reality" in the first requirement was intentional and provocative. Recall Ossorio's landmark distinction between "real world" and "reality" (Ossorio, 1969/1978) in which "reality" is seen to be a set of boundary conditions on real worlds. From here it is a short step to the following formulation:

"Soul" is a set of boundary conditions on an individual's Identity.

Specifically, Soul is a set of constraints on what the individual will recognize as essential to her Identity. As such, Soul is "knowable" only when the individual has the relevant life history to recognize that this particular place in the world is essential to who she knows herself to be. "Soul," then, is not a "thing" or entity at all—once again, what our object-biased language leads us to think of as an entity (Ossorio, 1997/1998) on closer examination turns out to be more appropriately seen as a state-of-affairs (the state-of-affairs of there being constraints on what an Individual will recognize as being essential to his Identity).

We will look next, and finally, at some other aspects of Being and Boundary.

Being and Boundary

Let us conclude our look at "Being" with some speculations about boundaries. Boundaries are fascinating because they demark a categorical change: what is within the boundary is one sort of thing, what is outside is quite another. The boundary itself often turns out to be intimately related to what is within, but categorically different. What, then, might we say about the boundaries of being?

"To be" is to be a particular someone. What might we say about the boundary of being—being in which one was *not* a particular someone, but not yet outside the category entirely into non-being? This is not mere fanciful speculation; the canon of many spiritual traditions includes something called "pure (or "absolute") being" (Sanskrit: "Sat"), which fits the description given above. Further, "to be" is to be conscious *as* a particular someone. The boundary of consciousness might be described as conscious, but not *as* any particular someone—again, in some spiritual canons, "pure (or "absolute") consciousness" (Sanskrit: "Chit"). What might we say about pure consciousness? And what might one be conscious *of* when one is conscious *as* ... nothing? Whatever we might say about "pure being" or "pure consciousness," we will not be surprised if, as boundary conditions, they turn out to be *categorically* different from being and consciousness as we know them.

Recall that both capacity and characteristics are aspects of a person. What capacity and characteristics might be ascribed to "pure being"? One possible answer is: "Why, none at all; only a particular someone has particular characteristics." And since capacity is essentially mysterious, known only in its manifestation through

actual characteristics, the capacity of "pure being" is therefore essentially and forever mysterious. This answer has some intriguing parallels in spiritual traditions which insist that nothing can be said of "pure being;" it is both unknown and unknowable; it cannot be described; it has no characteristics or aspects; it can only be experienced or encountered. Another possible answer is: "Since capacity serves as constraint on what characteristics a person can develop, pure being has no constraints whatsoever. Its knowledge is not constrained; its skills are not constrained." Again, this perhaps parallels spiritual traditions which depict "pure being" as omniscient and omnipotent.

And what of "pure consciousness?" What is one conscious *of* when one is conscious *as* nothing? Perhaps one is conscious of—nothing at all (which is not the same as being *not* conscious.) The Buddhist description of the Void—consciousness with no object—seems perhaps relevant here. And this perhaps sheds some light on traditions that say pure consciousness limits itself in order to have something to experience. Or perhaps one is conscious of everything equally, all at once, with no special interest in any particular thing. This perhaps resonates with spiritual traditions that speak of "equality vision," which characterize "pure consciousness" as dispassionate or beyond "attraction and aversion," or which state that "not a sparrow falls but what He knows."

These are all speculations, of course. But if they have any merit at all, they may serve to make intellectually accessible an otherwise inaccessible domain: the domain of mystical experience. Mystical experience is the ultimate paradigm case of the subjective; no amount of observer's knowledge will get you there. But mystical experience certainly is among the facts (or possible facts) of the behavior of persons; as such, Descriptive Psychology must include mystical experience in its purview. Perhaps these speculations may contribute to that end.

One final note: Those Sanskrit terms "Sat" and "Chit" are typically found in a single, tripartate word denoting the Supreme Being: "Satchitananda." Ananda means "Pure or Absolute Bliss." Let's leave *that* to the mystics—at least for now.

Becoming

"Becoming" is a long-standing, central concern of psychologists, in particular psychologists interested in psychopathology and psychotherapy. We seek insight into what people can and do become, how they become it, what prevents their becoming what they could be, and how to support them in becoming what they want or need to be. Descriptive Psychologists have created a distinctive approach to these matters of becoming, at the heart of which is a set of distinctions and methods collectively referred to as "status dynamics." This is not the place for a review of the canon of status dynamics; that ground has been covered elsewhere (e.g., Ossorio, 1976; Ossorio; 1982/1998). Instead, I propose to revisit these

questions of becoming from a somewhat different viewpoint, and to offer some idiosyncratic thoughts on "status dynamics" (some of which have long been incorporated into the Descriptive Psychology canon.) To see the point and purpose of this proposed revisiting, kindly allow me to fill in a bit of personal professional background.

I first heard that evocative phrase, "status dynamics," in 1970. I was a third-year graduate student in clinical psychology at the University of Colorado; Prof. Ossorio, with whom I had been studying intensively since 1965, was my therapy supervisor. As we would review and discuss the individuals I was seeing in therapy, from time to time Pete would drop in that phrase: "status dynamics." It was clear that "status dynamics" was meant in some way to characterize the approach to understanding Pete was trying to teach me, and that it contrasted meaningfully with "psychodynamics," but I only got hints and dribbles regarding just what the conceptual content of "status dynamics" might be. (At the time, there had been no formal presentation of these concepts in papers or courses.) I tried some of Pete's other graduate students; they were as baffled as I was. My approach to therapy changed and improved, but I would have been hard put to say exactly what it was past, "You know, status dynamics."

There matters might have remained save for the timely interventions of two individuals. I had the good fortune of interning in 1972–73 at the Volusia County, Florida, Community Mental Health Center under the supervision of Ray Mulry, Ph.D. Ray was a rare individual who was both a knowledgeable, skilled therapist, and a nurturing supervisor who saw his job as supporting my own discovery rather than teaching me his approach. He was intrigued by how I did therapy and how I talked about it, and commented that he thought I might find some food for thought in the works of the great hypnotherapist, Milton Erickson. This was a few years before Milton Erikson was made famous in the Neurolinguistic Programming formulations of Bandler and Grinder; what was available was Erickson's own collected papers, most of which were case formulations and contained little in the way of grand conceptualization (which seemed to hold little interest for him.) I read everything Erikson had published, and saw Dr. Mulry's point: there was something familiar here, different in detail but similar in intent, and certainly dealing with the dynamics of status in a direct way. And I began to see why Pete had gone to the trouble of offering a detailed status dynamic explication of some of Fritz Perls's work; Fritz, in his own way, was working with status dynamics ... interesting.

The second timely intervention came next year when my new boss, Dr. James Farr, asked me, a newly minted Ph.D., to write up a concept paper on a "non-clinic clinic" where we could offer "therapy" without using the concepts or terms of the medical model. This gave me the opportunity to stretch, so to speak. Freed of the academic straightjacket imposed on dissertation writers (and the more strenuous but subtle restraint of trying to say things in language that would not cause Pete to wince) I was able to formulate and assert, based on nothing more defensible than

my own understanding, what I thought I knew about "what makes people tick—and stick" (to quote a chapter heading from the paper.) That paper was entitled "Life Development Center: Concepts and Practices" (Putman, 1973). It was an extremely mixed bag: some gems ("Coercion elicits resistance" and "People become what they are treated as being," for example, first appeared here), some garbage, with a few atrocious puns mixed in. But at its core was my serious attempt to formulate exactly what was meant by "status dynamics." Based on my triangulation of the hints and examples from Ossorio, the written works of Milton Erickson, and the theories of Fritz Perls, I thought I finally understood what Pete had been getting at. I believed I was simply writing down what Pete had been trying to get me to see. I sent a copy of the paper to Dr. Ossorio and a few friends, and forgot about it.

Fast forward to 1978 to complete this historical prologue. After an absence of 5 years, I reconnected to the Boulder Descriptive Psychology community to discover that, in the meantime, Pete had given a seminar on clinical topics in which he laid out "status dynamics" in great detail. Imagine my surprise when I discovered that what he had meant by status dynamics, and what I had written in that paper, barely overlapped at all! Therapeutic images, scenarios, three-minute lectures, behavior potential, et. al.—what we now know as the canon of status dynamics was nowhere to be found in my paper. And as I looked closer, I saw Pete had covered much of the ground I had attempted to cover—but differently. And he had not covered all of it.

Over these past 25 years I have come to believe that some of the content of that paper, both that which has worked its way into the canon and some which has not, nonetheless has merit, as an additional view of status dynamics which supplements and complements Ossorio's. Leaving off this historical prologue, then, I propose straightforwardly to offer some conceptualizations of becoming, some of which will be very familiar to Descriptive Psychologists, some of which will not be—and all of which I take to be part of the Descriptive Psychology understanding of the dynamics of status. Let us now begin.

Becoming Basics

A Person's Identity and Personal Characteristics are works in progress; they are neither fixed nor indefinitely fluid. Like most works in progress, Identity and Personal Characteristics can appear to change rapidly and dramatically in the early going, while seeming far more finished in form and content as time goes by. Thus, while "becoming" is part of a Person's life-history throughout her life, it is particularly noticeable in childhood and adolescence. Accordingly, we will first direct our attention to those early years of becoming.

Babies have personal characteristics from (at least) the moment of birth. Whether they *really* have these characteristics, or we just think they do, is irrelevant here (and perhaps, like capacity, essentially mysterious)—what matters is that *we* adults see them as cute, or cranky, or cuddly, or intense, or placid, etc.,

and we treat them accordingly. Thus begins the key dynamic of status—by which I mean the process whereby "who I am" and "who I be" changes over time. This key dynamic can be summarized in a cluster of four maxims (or one maxim with three corollaries, if you prefer):

1. A person becomes what he acts as.

2. A person acts as who he takes himself to be.

3. A person takes himself to be what he is treated as being.

4. A person becomes what he is treated as being.

[NOTE: I take the first Maxim to be a specific instance of Maxim D8 in *Place* ("Relationships follow behavior"); the third Maxim can be seen as a restatement of Maxim D10 ("A person takes the world to be as he has found it to be.") These are logical relationships, not historical.]

This is the paradigm case of becoming. Of course, not all instances of becoming are paradigm case—there are important "unless" clauses to consider here. And, as we shall see, problems related to becoming can and do arise from apparently straightforward, paradigm case instances. Let's take these maxims one-by-one and note the important variations on the paradigm case.

"**A person becomes what he acts as.**" Not all instances of "acting as ..." are successful. Not all instances of successful "acting as ..." are satisfying, or worth the cost in foregone opportunity; the person may conclude, "I can do this, but it's just not me." (Think of the class clown who succeeds in acting as a serious student for a while, but sees the opportunities for wisecracks and misses the laughs he could have gotten.) Not all instances of "acting as ..." are serious attempts; some are playful, or intentionally experimental. Each of these instances refers to an unless clause for this maxim: "... *unless* acting as an X is unsuccessful, or leads to loss of behavior potential, or is found to be unsatisfying." These unless clauses are particularly relevant for child and adolescent persons, who are constantly trying on ways of being for fit. Problems can arise when the person does not become what he acts as, but is seen by others as being that way, who then treat him as they have found him to be. This is an "incongruent relationship": a person treated as being what he is not and has reason to avoid becoming. "Incongruent relationships" are a major component of problems of becoming and being; we will return to this topic later in this paper.

"A person acts as who he takes himself to be." ... *unless* he lacks the skills, knowledge or capacity to be that, or acting as that leads to loss of behavior potential, or is found to be unsatisfying, in which case he will change who he takes himself to be *if he can*. Problems arise when a person in fact changes who he takes himself to be in the face of insistence from someone in a position to insist, like a parent, or when he cannot change who he takes himself to be because such a change leaves him in an impossible position and is therefore unthinkable. Such

insistence or unthinkability can lead to problems of becoming and being; again, see below.

"A person takes himself to be what he is treated as being." The same unless clauses detailed above apply here, with some additions: "... *unless* he has a stronger reason to be something else, or he doesn't recognize what he is being treated as, for what it is." Being treated as an X is parallel to Move 1 in a Social Practice, while taking oneself to be what one is treated as is parallel to Move 2; and although "Move 1 invites Move 2" (*Place*, F5), it is also the case that "Move 2 preempts Move 1" (*Place*, F6). The person generally can simply decline the invitation; again, unthinkability and insistence can lead to problems here.

"A person becomes what he is treated as being." This is the overview maxim, dynamically linking who a person is to how he is treated. All the above unless clauses apply, of course. This maxim will serve as our touchstone reminder as we turn to issues of how problems of becoming and being develop.

Becoming Ambivalent

Becoming, although an adventure at times, need not be problematic. Mary is treated as being in a particular status or being a particular sort of person; she is willing and able to be that way; she successfully acts as what she is treated as being, and becomes that. Problems arise when she is either not willing or unable to be that, but cannot simply decline the invitation. As noted above, this can stem from either insistence or unthinkability. Unthinkability seems to be the more severe case; by contrast, insistence, and the resultant issues arising from incongruent relationships, is commonplace. (Can any among us truthfully say that our parents and teachers never insisted on treating us as being persons we were unwilling or unable to be? It happens, about as often as does buying clothes right off the rack that fit perfectly every time.) Accordingly, we will look carefully into the status dynamics of insistence, and leave unthinkability for another time.

Insisting on treating someone as who they cannot be or do not want to be is a straightforward case of coercion. This launches a key dynamic, because:

Coercion elicits resistance.

Coercion—the inappropriate limiting of a person's choices by another person—elicits resistance—a motivation to *not* do whatever you are trying to get me to do. Resistance is a state-of-affairs, and as such can continue over time long after the incident of coercion is gone and even forgotten. (In this way it is parallel to emotions, such as anger, on which see Ossorio, 1997a, pp. 99–161).

So long as all we have in the picture is coercion eliciting resistance, along with my abiding antipathy for being the X you are insisting I be, matters are fairly straightforward: I have two strong reasons for not being X, and that's that. But that is seldom just that. Resistance is a motivation to not do what you are trying to get me to do. Generally, the more and the stronger you push, the stronger my resistance

becomes, and that resistance can be to either being an X, or to you—or, commonly, to both. Thus, I not only resist being the X I don't want to be; I also resist being anything else you are trying to get me to be, including ways of being Y and Z which I both can be and want to be. Furthermore, I may discover on further investigation that I both have the ability to be X, and actually rather like it. (Ways of being, like olives, may be an acquired taste, and tastes can change over time.) So I want to be X, Y or Z while simultaneously wanting to not be X, Y or Z. One way of being, two simultaneous and opposed motivations: I am stuck, and the technical term for this way of being stuck is ambivalence.

Ambivalence has been an acknowledged human dilemma for as long as we have records of these things. The Roman poet Catullus wrote about ambivalence in the first century B.C.E.:

> I hate and love at the same time,
>
> For heaven's sake, Catullus, how?

Freud directed the attention of therapists toward anxiety as the root of problems in psychodynamics. In doing so, he directed our attention away from the root of problems in status dynamics, namely, ambivalence. I suspect that problems rooted in ambivalence may be as common as problems rooted in anxiety, if not more so.

People will go to remarkable lengths to avoid experiencing ambivalence. This is not surprising, in light of the discussion earlier in this paper of feelings as Actor's knowledge of place. If a person is ambivalent about being X, she has two feelings about it simultaneously, that is, she finds herself in two different places at once *vis-á-vis* being X—a disorienting place to be—or else finds herself literally nowhere at all. Either way, she has no place from which to be or act, no behavior potential in any situation involving being an X, and therefore no way to improve her situation. Not surprisingly, people tend to avoid experiencing their ambivalence at almost any cost.

What to do? On the face of it, it would seem that the thing to do is just to bite the bullet, choosing "to be or not to be" and then just do it. But experience shows that it is seldom that easy. After the initial burst of energy that comes from doing something (almost anything is better than being nowhere) we often see discouragement and loss of enthusiasm for the chosen pole; eventually the person winds up back where he started, stuck worse than ever. This happens because "just choosing" ignores the central reality of ambivalence—both poles are *legitimate* but opposed aspects of the person's motivations. Treating oneself as being one of the poles of the ambivalence is a form of self-coercion—and coercion elicits resistance. Putting energy into one of the poles of ambivalence strengthens the other pole, which is then acted on, which thus strengthens its opposite, which ... The person is well and truly stuck.

Unresolved ambivalence often leads to incongruent relationships of a particularly troublesome sort. Gil is ambivalent about being an independent, self-determined individual. He presents himself as dependent to Jill who, taking him as she finds him to be, treats him as dependent. Jill has now inadvertently taken on one of the poles of Gil's ambivalence. The more she treats him as dependent (unknowingly coercing him by doing so), the stronger becomes his resistance, and therefore his motivation to act on being independent. Gil had improved his situation; the ambivalence is now in the relationship, not within him, and he has a clear place and way to be. Jill can take Gil as she now finds him, treat him as independent, and thereby strengthen his dependence pole, which he then acts upon, and then round and around we go; or she can insist that Gil is really as she first found him to be, thereby getting really locked into his ambivalence. This later is especially powerful when Jill herself is ambivalent about the same X as Gil; then both act out the opposite pole of the other's ambivalence for them. The relationship is profoundly incongruent—both Gil and Jill regularly treat the other as being what he or she is not and has reason to avoid becoming—but it beats being nowhere, at least for a while.

This sheds some additional light on why people who lose important relationships may wind up in pretty poor shape for a while: in addition to losing the behavior potential involved in relating to Jill, poor Gil is now stuck once again with both poles of his ambivalence. Gil may immediately seek someone else to take on one of his poles for him; failing that, he may seek therapy, where he just may get his therapist to jump in and take on one of the poles. Again, almost anything is better than being stuck with both poles of one's own ambivalence.

A therapist engaged with an ambivalent client is well advised to avoid buying into either pole of the ambivalence (unless, like Fritz Perls, you decide to use coercion and resistance as dynamite to blow up the client's self-sustaining system, which at least makes for exhilarating therapy.) Treat the person as they actually are—that is, as ambivalent. This gives them a place to be from which to act, and therefore to become, without resistance. The route out of ambivalence appears to lie, not in acting it out, but in seeing your way clear of it.

Becoming Stuck

"Becoming" has two related but different meanings. Up to now, we have been dealing with "becoming" in its developmental sense—what a person becomes (and therefore is able to be) over time as the result of his capacity and relevant history. In these instances of "becoming" a person changes her Personal Characteristics and/or Identity. Let's now turn to the second sense of "becoming": what a person becomes in a given situation based on who she is and what opportunities and requirements exist in the situation. In these instances of "becoming" a person manifests her Personal Characteristics and/or Identity. Along the way, we will look at how some other problems of becoming commonly arise.

Persons are far more complex than we ordinarily give them credit for. In particular, people are capable of becoming an astonishing variety of versions of themselves, given the right circumstances. We can capture some of that complexity in the following maxim:

5. A person becomes what the situation calls for him to be.

Since this is a maxim rather than a law of nature, we won't be dismayed to find a person *not* becoming an X when the situation calls for it; we will, however, look for an explanation. The person may have stronger reason to become something else that the situation gives her opportunity to become; she may lack the capacity to become an X; she may have stronger reasons to avoid becoming X; she may mistakenly think she has become an X; she may take it that the situation calls for her to become a Z. Our paradigm case, nonetheless, is as the maxim states.

This maxim is particularly relevant in understanding what goes on in communities and organizations. "The situation" is shorthand for the more complex "his place in the current on-going practice(s) of his community." Since place paradigmatically is known by the Actor as feelings, without any particular reflection or thought, this "becoming what is called for" typically occurs with a kind of automatic regularity which can surprise or even dismay the Observer/Appraiser. ("I promised myself I wouldn't let myself get sucked into being the bad guy again, and before I knew it ...") Therapists and Organizational Consultants in particular recognize the difficulty in translating good intentions (i.e., what the Observer/Appraiser wants) into reality (what the Actor sees as called for and therefore becomes.) It is a commonplace occurrence: people get well and truly "stuck" in becoming as Actors what they (Observer/Appraiser) really do not want to be.

How, then, can we help a person get "unstuck"? As suggested above in "Being and Versions," we do so by inviting her into a different status altogether, or by successfully redefining the status she is already becoming. Since we are dealing with Actors here, this invitation or redefinition needs to take place while the Actor is engaged, not merely through engaging the Observer/Appraiser. There are two basic approaches:

1. We can invite her into a different status altogether by changing "the current on-going practice" to a new or alternative version of the practice. This requires the involvement and perhaps the cooperation of others in the community, who, via Move 1 or Move 2, enact the practice differently. This might be called the "family therapist" or "community dynamics" approach—change what people become ("the versions of the people that show up") by changing the practices they engage in.
2. We can successfully redefine the status she is already becoming by arranging for her to observe it being enacted differently, and then supporting her in practicing the new way until she can become it readily. This could be called the "coaching"

approach, and might well involve the coach in modeling the different enactment of the status.

Neither of these is likely to work well, however, when the person is stuck in "symbolic hangover." In this case, the person sees the current situation as being symbolically similar to some *earlier* situation, and therefore becomes what that earlier situation called for him to become. (As always with symbolic behavior, we are not assuming the person is consciously aware of the similarity, merely that he in fact acts on it.) Here we need the therapist's repertoire, as extensively delineated in the canon of status dynamic therapy, to engage the Observer/Appraiser as well as the Actor.

Becoming Me

I would like to conclude this consideration of Becoming by briefly revisiting some considerations of Identity. If becoming is a work in progress, it is perhaps best understood as a work of art. Each of us is creating our own Identity; to put it differently, each of us is actively engaged in a life-long process of becoming ... *me*. Not all works of art succeed, of course, even by their own lights; not all journeys of becoming result in greater clarity and certainty regarding who I am. But clarity and certainty are the paradigm case, and are the standards by which we ultimately appraise our creation of self. "Who am I?" is the core question of Identity. "I am me" is the core answer, both signifying that we have arrived at the boundary of that inquiry, and positively affirming there is no further point to asking the question.

But if a person can assert, "I am me" with clarity and certainty, what room is there for "becoming"? Haven't we already become what we are, and from here on it's just a matter of playing out the hand, so to speak? Does our creation of self, our active journey of becoming, end in effect when we no longer need to ask, "Who am I?"

No—far from it. The journey of becoming has hardly begun when Identity is certain and clear. Recall Ossorio's provocative distinction between "the vulgarly 'actual' and ... the actually possible." (Ossorio, 1982/1998, p. 106). "Me"—who I am at core to myself—includes both me as an actual colleague, and me as a possible friend. In becoming what is possible for me (again quoting Ossorio, "not *merely* possible, but *actually* possible") I am not changing who I am; I am actualizing ("making actual") who I am. Becoming, then, can be either a process of discovery or a process of self-actualization—and sometimes it is both.

One last point: does Identity itself change for an adult person whose Identity is clear and certain? It can, if the person's "actual possibilities" change. For example, if you have held yourself as ineligible for certain statuses in your community—say, entrepreneur or parent—and see someone like you successfully enacting those ways of being, you may change your view of your possibilities and thereby your view of who you are. Or if you encounter someone who is being in the world in ways

you never before imagined possible (as Carlos Casteneda famously did in the person of Don Juan) and if you become convinced that these ways of being are possible for you, your core Identity—me, who I am—can change dramatically. In matters of becoming, perhaps our final word should be to echo the great Yogi, who said: "It ain't over, till it's over."

Belonging

Issues of "belonging" has received considerable attention from Descriptive Psychologists. Since the early germinal articles on Community and Culture (Putman, 1981; Ossorio, 1982/83) a substantial body of literature has addressed issues of persons in community, in organizations, in various cultures and in cultural transition, along with questions of how best to lead and/or change organizations. This paper acknowledges and applauds this body of literature. Again, it is clear that Ossorio intended from the beginning to include such issues within the purview of Descriptive Psychology, since talk of participating in social practices is found in his earliest writings (e.g., Persons). The fact that we are continuing to explore basic issues of becoming over thirty years later speaks both to the importance, as well as to the complexity, of the topic. In this paper, I wish to articulate some aspects of belonging which connect directly to being and becoming, and again, some of this is familiar ground to Descriptive Psychologists, while some perhaps is not.

Being and Belonging

Being and belonging are connected in the deepest possible way. To be is to be "conscious as" the status one is being at the time. To be a particular status is to have a place within the social practices of a particular community. Thus, consciousness—that most personal and individual aspect of a person's identity—is directly and inextricably connected to the most public aspect of identity, one's place in the social practices of the community.

But this directly contradicts common opinion. Being—especially being one's own authentic self—is frequently portrayed in our culture as in conflict with belonging. One's place in the social practices of one's community is seen as confining or restricting; one's consciousness of that place is portrayed as predominantly the awareness of "this is not me, this is other people's ideas of who I should be." Becoming conscious of "the real me" seems to require rejecting one's place in the community and finding one's own place. This is a conflict experienced by virtually every adolescent in our culture, and a not insignificant number of adults as well.

What are we to make of this apparent contradiction? Must one choose between "being myself" and belonging—and, indeed, can that choice actually be made? If so, how; if not, what is one to do instead? To address these questions, we need to

take a somewhat extended look at the dynamics of communities, to see some important conceptual and actual connections between communities and their individual members.

A community begins with a shared, specific view of the world. Our world is a world in which ... (fill in the blank)—the spontaneous creation of art is the only worthwhile occupation; the spirit of God manifests in every particular; we make automobiles which are accessible to the masses instead of just to the rich; we recreate as closely as possible the life and times of medieval Europe without the nasty bits; etc. ad infinitum. It is easy to talk about the world as being a particular way; what makes a group of people a community is that these people actually *see* the world this way and succeed in treating it that way. Thus, they share this view of the world; they have ways of talking about their world in which they can make the relevant distinctions; they have shared practices, ways of treating the world and each other, that are cases of acting upon their view of the world; and they choose to participate in these practices with no further end in mind.

Let's examine the dynamics of community life by tracking the (wholly fictitious) history of an equally fictitious community—the Children of God. (Again, no reference to any actual community known by this name or known by any other name is intended in any way whatsoever.) The Children of God began in what might be called a shared revelation. One person saw the world as a place where God manifests in every moment and in every particular; as such, she experienced herself as a child of God. She talked about this with another person, who had a similar view; they interacted with others who came to see the world as they did; and the community of the Children of God was born. To reiterate a very important point: the community began with a shared view of the world; its members actually saw and experienced the world and themselves as manifestations of God.

Members of this community talked with each other about their world and their place in it; quickly they found that particular phrases seemed to convey aspects of their experience very well, and so these became a common way of talking. Since being a child of God is a paradigm case of good fortune, and good fortune calls for celebration, they found that many of their activities when they were together had a celebratory aspect; even such simple things as eating together were opportunities for celebration. The first few times they did a particular thing together were spontaneous expressions of how they viewed the world and each other; these worked so well that they tended to repeat them. Thus, the community's language and practices began to form.

Over time some of the practices became core practices, participated in by everyone in clearly understood ways in which everyone knew the available options, and everyone could enact their place accordingly. Thus customs were born—consistent versions of how to do the core practices, and how to be as you were doing them. Some of these were so central, and so often repeated (especially the celebrations) that they became rituals, always done just so; participation in

these required very specific enactment, and therefore the places in them were codified into roles. And they worked; each time the members participated in the core practices in the customary way, or took a role in a ritual enactment, they experienced the satisfaction that accompanies participating in an intrinsic practice, and they experienced their world and themselves as manifestations of God.

As they reflected on their experience and discussed their interactions, as people are wont to do, the Children of God noticed that some versions of their practices seemed particularly satisfying, while others seemed less so or even off the mark entirely. They were able to account for these differences by noting certain features; these became formulated as principles which served as effective standards when they were called upon to assess their own behavior, or the behavior of others (which became more and more necessary as more and more people joined this community).

Here we have the picture of the community of the Children of God in springtime, so to speak: a group of people who share a view of the world; who know how to treat the world and each other in accordance with that view; who can talk among themselves about their world and make the relevant distinctions; who have customary practices and places within them, as well as rituals and roles, in which they participate with great satisfaction; who have shared principles which accurately reflect how and why their world and their interactions are as they are; who know and embrace their place in the life of their community. This is truly the golden age of the Children of God.

Let us now fast-forward many years to the present. The Children of God still exist as a community, but there have been some changes. The community has accumulated physical wealth and property over time; there are buildings to maintain, assets to invest, budgets to meet. People have joined the community for the specific purpose of dealing with this wealth and property, and while they know and respect the principles and rituals ... well, it's not so easy to see everything as a manifestation of God while simultaneously running credit checks and cutting costs, so for some key people in the Children of God, the world is mostly a place of numbers and balance sheets. Everyone still knows exactly how to participate in the rituals, and knows how to enact their role in them. The customs are so ingrained that few people even recognize the possibility of alternative versions of the practices. The principles have become articles of faith which are memorized by new members. But for many people something is missing. Rituals and customs are simply the done thing; it seems that nobody actually experiences them as cases of acting on seeing the world as a manifestation of God, although many still get the satisfaction of participating in an intrinsic practice, since "Satisfaction accompanies participation." The language which once described so accurately the experience of the Children of God is now just formula, empty phrases which mostly show that we know how one of us talks. The principles which once served to keep us focused and

aligned are now at best lofty aspirations; at worst they serve as sticks with which we beat dissidents into line.

What is missing here is—the world. The Children of God still know the roles and rituals and principles; they know how to act and how to be, as one of us. They may even know the world as an arena for lofty aspiration. What they no longer know is the world as a place where God manifests in every particular. They know themselves as Children of God; they no longer know themselves as a child of God. This is the autumn of the Children of God, and like the seasons, it comes naturally in the life of a community. People are born, grow, age and die; communities arise, thrive, decline and eventually fall—but unlike people, communities have at least the possibility of being reborn.

Then into the autumn of this community a child is born. Judith grows up as one of the Children of God; she learns the customs and rituals and language of her community, and comes to know her place and how to enact it. And indeed these practices are intrinsic for her; she experiences satisfaction in her participation. Until one day she notices that something is missing. She finds herself just going through the motions; she gets no satisfaction from participation in her community, in fact she finds herself chafing under the restrictions of her role. Her primary consciousness in this community is "this is not me, this is other people's ideas of who I should be." She reads books on alienation, and finds she fits the description; discussing existentialism with her classmates leads her to decide she needs to search for her "authentic self." It's a short step from here to "I can't be part of the Children of God and still be me. I live in a different world from the Children of God."

So here we are, back where we started. But now we have a little more context for understanding this dilemma. The world as known to Judith differs from the world as depicted by the Children of God. This could be because her upbringing was faulty; she got the moves down but never saw the point of them, in which case she needs someone in the community to help her see the world as we Children of God see it. Or it could be that the customs and roles of this community contain restrictions on how a person like Judith can participate, which were common and acceptable back when the customs evolved but which are not found in other communities she participates in today and which she finds too confining; in that case, she may need to find an alternative community where these restrictions are not customary, or else work actively within the Children of God to legitimize alternative versions of these customary practices in which the roles are more suited to her. Both of these cases assume the community and its world continues to thrive.

But there is another case, which I believe accounts for the common opinion that being and belonging are antagonists. Judith's world differs from the world depicted by the Children of God because the world depicted by the Children of God is no longer in fact the world they share. The practices, language, customs, roles, principles, etc. all developed as ways of being and acting in a world in which God

manifests in every particular, but the Children of God no longer actually see the world that way. There in fact is no world within which Judith's role has its place; small wonder, then that she finds it impossible to be herself in that role. What is required here is nothing less than the rebirth of her community, either a revitalization in which the members rediscover how to see the world as a manifestation of God in all particulars so that the practices etc. once again fit the world, or else a reformation in which the roles, principles, customs, etc. are revamped to express the world as the Children of God have now come to see it. If neither of these happen, Judith is left with either finding a new community is which she can in fact be her authentic self, or else settling for ways of being which she knows to be inauthentic (but which she nonetheless sees as better than nothing, or constant struggle.)

We can summarize the relation between being and belonging in two maxims:

- Being requires belonging. (This is a pithy paraphrase of *Place* Maxim E1, Ossorio 1982/1998: "A person requires a community on order for it to be possible for him to engage in human behavior at all.") Belonging is not just a matter of knowing how to speak the language, or how to act properly at the right time, or which slogans to quote when, or even being recognized and treated as "one of us;" it is a matter of seeing the world as a member of this community sees it, and acting accordingly.
- Satisfaction accompanies participation. Participation is not just doing the done thing; it is doing what the world as we see it calls for now.

Becoming and Belonging

Let's loop back to the Children of God to examine more closely some of the complexities of belonging. Recall the community member—let's call him John—who has responsibility for budgeting and resource allocation. We observed in passing that it's not so easy to see everything as a manifestation of God while simultaneously running credit checks and cutting costs, so for some key people in the Children of God, like John, the world is mostly a place of numbers and balance sheets. We see this in every community and organization, and not just when we look at the keepers of the numbers; we see it in those who engage with the machines, or the technologies, or the suppliers, or the interpersonal relationships, etc. One aspect of the functioning of the community is, or becomes, central and primary for those engaging with it, so that the world they inhabit is not the world of the community itself, but the much more technical world defined by whatever they engage with the most. What seems at first to be a single community turns out on closer inspection to be a number of more-or-less closely connected tribes, each with its own specific technical view of the community. This is another seemingly inevitable progression in the life of communities which contributes to its fragmentation and decline. But is it a one-way, irreversible trend? Can one be a full

participant in the larger community while effectively engaging in one's technical world? If so, how? If not, then what can keepers of the community do in the face of the continual "war of the worlds" which break out among the tribes? A short walk in John's shoes may shed some light on these important questions.

John became who he is in the Children of God by one of two routes:

1. He was a member of the Children of God who became a specialist in numbers in the course of participating in the life of the community. In this case, he knows—or at least *knew*—the world of the Children of God as well as knowing the world of numbers.
2. He was a numbers specialist who joined the Children of God to take care of the numbers. In this case he knows the world of numbers but may only know *about* the world of the Children of God.

If John joined just to take care of the numbers, the situation is relatively straightforward. He is an outsider. He may be an important, valued person in our community, but he is not and never has been truly one of us because he has never shared in our world. So long as we all keep his outsider standing in mind, and we do not expect him to see and appreciate the world as we do (and so long as there are not so many outsiders that they begin to overwhelm the members) John need not be a problem or pose a threat to the Children of God. Of course, there will be practices in which he cannot participate, especially the core practices; if he wishes to participate fully in the Children of God, John will have to actually become one of us. Since there are usually advantages for someone in John's position being a full member of the community, he may decide to join without actually sharing in our world, but this is not a fundamental dilemma: a community that is not able routinely to distinguish those who share our world from those who are merely pretending will not last long.

At this point I would note again that the Children of God is a convenient fiction, and that none of the preceding considerations depend in any way on the focus of the community being spiritual or religious. This applies to any community or organization, even those whose world consists of customers and products and balance sheets. (Recall that an organization is "a community with a mission," viz. Putman, 1990). Every organization faces the challenge of making the most of the talents and energies of people who have joined the organization in order to succeed at practicing their trade or craft or profession; indeed, most organizations these days appear to be made up mostly of people for whom their primary or even their sole world is their technical world. (C. J. Peek has written elegantly about this distinction between practicing a profession and participating in an organization in the context of health care; see Peek, 1998).

Back to John, the technician outsider. As noted, a few such are not a problem for most communities, but typically it is in the best interests of both the community and John if he actually becomes one of us. How does this happen? The short

answer (and the longer answer is just too long for this paper) is: through involvement that leads to participation. Recall Ossorio's classic image of the chess player. A true member of the chess community plays chess for its own sake; she participates and appreciates the satisfaction that accompanies participation. But when you first begin playing chess, you cannot be doing it for its own sake. You can do it to explore new options, to look intellectual, to win friends or influence your uncle—but you can't straightforwardly play chess for the intrinsic satisfaction of playing chess until you *are* a chess player. And you become a chess player by engaging in chess until you start sharing in the world of chess. In Descriptive Psychology we reserve the terms "participation" and "appreciation" to characterize how it is for full-fledged members of a community; with that reminder, I would offer the following maxim to summarize the dynamics of this "short answer":

Involvement precedes appreciation.

Thus, for John the technical outsider to become "one of us" he needs to become involved in our world—and not just in the technical version of our world he brought with him. As a side note: many organizations today are comprised almost wholly of technical outsiders, clustered in tribes, each convinced that their view of the organization is not only the true view, but the *only* view. The challenge of aligning such an organization—that is, of creating and/or nurturing the world of the whole organizational community—is the most important and perhaps the most difficult challenge facing leaders today. It begins by engaging the entire organization as actors in creating or renewing a shared view of where we are and the future we want to create—but that's the beginning of the long answer, for another time.

But what of the other John, who was once one of us but has become just the keeper of the numbers? How did this happen? And what, if anything, can we do by way of remedy, and to prevent it from happening in the future?

The answer to how it happened is simple—suspiciously, perhaps deceptively, simple. We can answer it with a single slogan (which I am loath to call a maxim, but am not sure if it is a half-baked theory, a quasi-empirical generalization, or a wiseacre observation):

***Anything*, done long enough or often enough, becomes intrinsic.**

People famously get locked into baffling, self-defeating or just plain useless habits of acting for which we struggle to give an account. Why do they keep doing it? Maxims like "Better the poison you know than the poison you don't" point to something similar. As Tee Roberts often reminds us, world-construction is a core part of what persons do (Roberts, 1985). John constructs his world largely from the materials at hand; when he engages frequently with a particular set of objects, with their attendant processes and logic, it seems almost inevitable that he constructs a world with these as ultimate particulars. And since part of the purpose of world-construction is to have an arena for significant action, participation in this

world would quite reasonably become intrinsic—especially since John finds others who share his world. (This is a conceptual requirement, not a happy accident; as Don Juan said of Don Genaro: "He makes the world real.")

(I recall sitting with a group of Bell Labs software designers when one of them innocently asked: "I wonder what they actually want out there in Userland?" Everyone chuckled at the nice quip. Then someone talked about trying a module out in Userland; then someone else made a remark about getting out into Userland to find out, and within minutes what had been a clever metaphor had become a real place to these people, as tangible as Kansas and twice as interesting. The human ability to construct and inhabit worlds is vast, and vastly underappreciated.)

So John almost inevitably constructs and occupies his numbers world. But *must* he do this by contrast to, or in exclusion of, the world of the Children of God? The fact that it often happens that way does not require that it always be so. It depends, ultimately, on what John takes to be ultimate. The ultimate object in John's numbers world is a number; the ultimate object in the world of the Children of God is a manifestation of God. John could see a number as simply another manifestation of God; if he succeeds in doing so, he has successfully embedded his numbers world in the greater world of his community—which is the proper relation between the world of a community and the worlds of its tribes. Wise keepers of the community will recognize that John will tend to "backslide," if you will; the logic of numbers is seductive and it is easy to lose track of the bigger picture. But the bigger picture is there, for the community and for John, so with appropriate care and reminders we can keep the integrity of both worlds while not fragmenting or degrading the community itself.

Belonging and Boundary

One last speculation: what are we to make of the boundaries of belonging? At one boundary the person belongs nowhere. He is part of no community; he participates in no practices; he therefore has no behavior potential and experiences no satisfaction. This is a reasonable description of a literal non-person. Being requires belonging; non-belonging implies non-being. This may also be a reasonable depiction of the "unthinkable," the total loss of behavior potential to which even suicide may seem preferable.

What of the other boundary? At this boundary the person belongs everywhere. She is one of us wherever she goes. All her actions are participation; everything she does is accompanied by the deepest satisfaction; she is her authentic self with everyone in every situation. What sort of person might this be? Recall the third part of Satchitananda, the Sanskrit term for the supreme being—Ananda, Supreme Bliss. Might that just be another way of saying constant, deep satisfaction? And is such a state truly possible for a human person? *That* we will definitely leave to the theologians and mystics. There are boundaries, after all—even to Descriptive Psychology.

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