

Rap Session with Peter G. Osorio

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This rap session was conducted in a question and answer format, with the bold section headings below each representing one of the questions that was asked.

Temperament

(?) Where does temperament fit in Descriptive Psychology?

Ossorio: If you look at the literature, temperament refers to a PC [Person Characteristic], very much like a trait, and it's different from most traits in that it's present from birth presumably, from very early on, and shows more than the usual persistence. It's harder to change temperament than it is to change traits or attitudes or PC's like that.

Now in the Descriptive formulation, you would go immediately to the Developmental Schema and to the formula that says, "You acquire a PC by virtue of having a prior capacity and the relevant intervening history." Now prior capacity you can trace all the way back to original capacity, which is what you have when you're born or whenever one dates your beginning. The capacity you have then is your original capacity. It doesn't really matter that different people will date your beginning at different times. The logic is exactly the same in any case. Wherever the beginning is, that's where your original capacity is covered.

Now every characteristic that you ever acquire has its potential in that original capacity. One of the exercises you could do with original capacity is to push the limits. Take away every characteristic that you know of and what's left? What's left is original capacity. Now if you apply the formula, and say, where is there room for play here? One of them is clearly, how long does it take, given the right history and the right capacity, how long does it take to acquire those characteristics? And for temperament, you would say, well that's one of those that you acquire quickly, if you have the original capacity for it, because it shows up very early on. So it doesn't take much of a history to acquire it.

Now, at the other end, the question might refer to, "If you have a notion like that, what do you do with it? What does it contribute that other PC notions like traits, attitudes, etc. don't contribute?" And as far as I can see, the only answer is the answer that's in the literature, namely temperament is early and it's hard to change.

(?) Aren't there some connections to embodiment? Couldn't you say that temperament has a basis in physiological sensitivities?

Ossorio: Yeah, but then you could say that about everything, including your scratching your ear right now. That has a basis in embodiment. Sure. Everything does. So that doesn't distinguish temperament from anything else.

(?) [inaudible]

Ossorio: No, it's trait-like in its nature, and I would say in terms of the existing taxonomy, it's a trait. And the difference between these and other traits, as I say is the early on and how hard it is to change.

(?) Could you say "He has a hostile temperament"?

Ossorio: Yeah, you hear parents say, "From the very first day he was a cheerful baby." Now that kind of language is the mark of, they're talking about temperament. You might say that temperament occupies one portion of the spectrum of possible trait-like characteristics.

(?) [inaudible]

Ossorio: I would resist that kind of tendency. [laughter] But it's not easy. Think how easy it is to make that move, and how hard it is to say "That's wrong." Any trait that's present at all, you could probably find precursors going way back, and who's to say that wasn't temperament starting from way back there that only shows up twenty years later. If you want to talk that way, you can. The facts won't prevent you, but you've lost something. You have lost the distinction now between trait and temperament.

(?) Would it be more like a style? You think of things like placid, excitable, cheerful, apprehensive. They don't seem to be so much what you do, but how you do it, more style than temperament.

Ossorio: Now remember style has to do with only performance, which is why it connects to how you do it. But cheerful, apprehensive ... Name a few temperaments and see what comes out. Give me some temperament terms.

(?) Placid. Sensitive. Tense. Irritable. Hyper. Shy. Difficult. Distractable.

Ossorio: Well it seems to be sort of 50/50. Most of the terms that we've heard seem to have some performance aspects. But keep in mind, that you might say it would have to, if it's something that you can recognize at an early age. What else do have to go by in a one-day-old baby other than performative sorts of things? For example, for someone who is irritable and that's his temperament, you expect it to show up in genuine irritation. It's not just the way he does things. And on those grounds I would say, "No, it's trait-like, even though it has significant performance aspects."

(?) The place of temperament now in contemporary psychology might be ... If we can demonstrate that it's physiologically based, then we can treat it with medication.

Ossorio: Well if that's so, then that's a good explanation for why suddenly people are talking temperament. But when you think of how many old ideas suddenly become popular, and all of a sudden you've got ten million PTSD's. You've got another ten million ADHD's. After you've been through that cycle a few times you get a little bit wary.

(?) Wary or weary?

Ossorio: Wary. [laughter] But, you also come to appreciate that it's easy to do that, that the facts will not prevent you from doing it.

(?) So there's nothing to stop you from talking that way.

Ossorio: Yeah. The issue is, is there some advantage? And as you can see with the idea that you've lost a distinction that you really needed if you assimilate everything out to temperament, that's a disadvantage. And I don't see any corresponding advantage.

Status and Relationship

(?) What is the difference, or interrelationship, between the concepts of status and relationship?

Ossorio: In principle it's fairly simple, and it's a fundamental point. Think of all of the things in the room and think of the various relationships that there are among the things in the room. And then count them. [laughter] And what you find is our favorite combinatorial explosion. Because if you have got 100 things in the room, then you've got 99 pairs of relations between any two. Then think of how many there are where you have three-way relations, and four-way relations, and five-way relations, and six, all the way down the line. Well that number goes up. What that means is, practically speaking, it's an impossibility to manage. You can't manage that many things in your head. And yet, those relationships are extraordinarily important, because your behavior potential depends on it.

Your behavior potential depends on your relation to everything in the world, singly, doubly, triply, etc. You have the behavior potential you have because of those relationships. And yet, the ensemble is unmanageable. Well people are ingenious, and here is a case in point. Way back when, before the dawn of prehistory, they figured out an alternative scheme.

Imagine the same room and instead of talking about relations between the things in the room, we simply take each of the things in the room. We say where it is. We give it a place, a location. Now from those places you can derive all of the relationships that were unmanageable. The places are manageable because there's only a hundred of them. If there are a hundred things in the room then there's a hundred places that you have to keep track of. And there is no comparison between the ease of keeping track of a hundred places versus keeping track of 10 to the 25th relationships.

Now the place, you might say the "place language" or the "place system of thinking about these" is convertible into the relationship language, and the relationship way of doing. And so there's your relationship between the two, the place is the status, and relation is relation. So the relation between relation and status is that they are convertible to one another as systems, as descriptive systems, as representational systems. They are convertible one to the other. And it's that simple.

(?) Convertible doesn't mean the same as? In other words, status isn't a collection of relationships?

Ossorio: No. But status corresponds to a set of relations. And the relation to behavior is exactly the same. You have the behavior potential you have by virtue of the relationships you have. You have the behavior potential you have by virtue of the status you have. Any comments?

Pure Consciousness

(?) Is there a point to talking about pure consciousness, and if so, what is it?

Ossorio: It seems to me that I've encountered this question before, and my recollection is I tried to answer it substantively. Let me go the other way this time, and indicate what are the considerations involved in making that decision.

Number one, I would never say that there is *no* point in talking that way. History is full of exceptions to universal principles. Remember from your test taking days, "Never say always" and "Never say never," and that's why. Even if there were no point currently in talking that way it wouldn't surprise me if sometime soon there were. Because people clearly have some inclination to talk that way, and if they have the inclination to talk that way, some way or another they probably are going to find a way to do it that does make sense. So just dealing with "Is there a point to it or not?" is probably relatively fruitless, because any answer is going to get outdated.

So let me talk instead about the issues. Why wouldn't you talk that way? And let me give you a thought experiment. Imagine we've got here a blue circle and I say "Gee, that would look great, if you took away the form and the color and the texture." [delayed laughter] Incidentally I say, "*What* would look great?"

Well that's the kind of question that talking about pure consciousness invites. What makes you think there is such a thing? How would you know it if you had it? How does having that kind of consciousness differ from not having consciousness? Now, if as Tony's talk suggested, this is the kind of thing that you have to live through an experience of, before you are going to talk sense about it, then most of us I suspect are eliminated because we haven't had that experience. On the other hand, speaking of having that experience, we are back to, how would you know if some experience you had was *that* experience?

Now, there's a different angle on that, and that is the notion of boundary conditions. In the few places where I've discussed boundary conditions, one of the things that comes out pretty quickly is that anybody who deals with that kind of subject matter, inevitably talks in strange ways. And some of them are bad. For example, if you're talking about faith and you say, "Faith is knowledge with no evidence to back it up", that makes it sound like a pretty poor specimen of cognition, doesn't it? And yet it's true, faith is knowledge with no evidence to back it up.

However, if you also explain that evidence comes to an end, and that if you are ever going to know anything, you've got to know something without some further evidence, then it doesn't sound like such a poor relation to say that well, faith is knowledge without evidence. Or in the old days, when they talked about the "uncaused cause" to indicate that the sequence of causation comes to an end. You have a problem in what could possibly end it? And without a good candidate for what could possibly end it, you have to make up a super something to bring it to an end. A cause that isn't itself a cause. Well that's a mighty peculiar specimen.

That's the way you need to talk in order to make the kind of points you need to make, if you are talking about boundary conditions. Now this has the earmarks of that kind of problem. And I won't pursue that in detail because I don't think that it would be productive, but it has that feel about it. That there is another way of talking that would not involve this way of talking with its attendant difficulties. And certainly the discussions this morning indicate that you are dealing with a boundary condition there. Comments?

(?) Even if there is not a reason now, does that mean that there is not reason to believe that in the future there might be? Are you talking about instances where people haven't established some convention or customary ways to talk about it, or something at a more meaningful level?

Ossorio: I think the latter. Part of the reason people talk strangely when they reach boundary conditions is that they haven't sufficiently examined and analyzed the whole situation. When they do what usually happens is they come in with a different way of talking, not with terms that are the same as we use in everyday contexts, but with something very special about them. Like an *uncaused* cause, like *pure* consciousness.

(?) There are a lot of simpler models in pure mathematics of stuff that look like boundary conditions. I won't attempt to give any examples. All of them have this same kind of character, that they look sort of strange compared to the sort of finite stuff that weTypically, each of those kinds of situations spawn a number of different mathematical models all of which are more or less satisfactory ways of dealing with the boundary condition. None of them you would immediately fall in love with, because like you say, all of them have some kind of strangeness to them. But you would typically find two or three or four different such models, each with a different strangeness, and "you pay your money and take your choice." So it would not be surprising if something like that happened here.

Ossorio: Yeah, that sounds about right. Boundary conditions are boundary conditions. The problems they present are pretty much the same.

Joy and Satisfaction

(?) How do you describe joy differently from happiness or satisfaction, and how can people increase the joy in their lives?

Ossorio: I might even try answering this. [laughter] In the survey of emotions, there is a generalized formula and it's essentially a formula for symbolic behavior where you do A by doing B. Emotional behavior has this structure. In all cases of emotional behavior, you are doing A by doing B. Now the differences among the emotions are in the K value. It's what you discriminate that sets off a behavior that distinguishes fear behavior from anger behavior, from guilt behavior, from joy, and from other different emotional behaviors.

In that sense joy is simply one on the list of emotional behaviors. And remember by virtue of the whole arrangement for generating person characteristics, for every emotional behavior there is a variety of emotional PC's. For every emotional behavior, for example, there are two emotional traits. There are two emotional attitudes, at least two. There are a variety of emotional skills. There are some number of emotional styles. So emotional behavior is the lynch pin upon which all of the other emotional concepts hinge.

As I say, in this sense, joy is simply one on the list of primary emotions. Now the reality condition for joy is simply good fortune. When good things happen, you react with joy.

Now one of the interesting things about that list, I used to ask people in class to give me a list of emotions. Just that. Give me a list of everything you think of as an emotion. And then I would tally them on the blackboard. The big three were anger, fear and guilt. Everybody thought anger, fear and guilt were emotions. Just about everybody had one positive emotion and it was joy or ecstasy or something, but usually it was just one. Then there were things like envy, jealousy and shame and things like that where you had something like 70 to 90 percent agreement, that these are emotions. And as you look at the list, if you cut it off at 70 percent, all you'd have is familiar items on that list.

And one thing stood out like a sore thumb, namely there were about maybe a dozen, maybe ten, items on the list and if you divide emotions into negative emotions and positive emotions, essentially there was only one positive emotion and all the rest were negative emotions. The question is, "How come?" Certainly that's not something you've ever encountered in the literature on emotion I would bet, even though I'm not one hundred percent sure, but I would bet you haven't. And yet once you mention it, it's obvious. Just run down your own list.

Well the answer is neat and simple. Namely this. Remember that there is a reality base for each emotion. For the negative emotions the reality base is that you're in a bad spot. One way or another, you're in a bad spot. And being in that bad spot, you are motivated to get out of that bad spot and to a better spot. And the attempt to get from where you are to a better spot is the emotional behavior. For example, if I recognize that I'm in danger, then I try to escape the danger. If I recognize that I've been provoked, then I counterattack. If I recognize that I have done her wrong, I try to make amends. So for the negative emotions, the behavior consists of trying to change the situation from being in a bad spot to being in a good one, or a better one.

Now because of that, you have to make a lot of distinctions because if you are going to try to make it better, you better not treat a fear situation the way you treat a guilt situation. Your efforts are going to doom you, unless you distinguish the different kinds of bad situations, because what you do about it depends on what kind of bad situation it is. Now in contrast, good fortune doesn't require that you do anything about it. It doesn't put you in the position of "Now I've got to work myself out of this. How do I do it? What are the facts?" On the contrary, with good fortune you jump for joy and you celebrate.

(?) Once you formulate it that way, I start thinking of other positive emotions, like eagerness.

Ossorio: Eagerness is not an emotion.

(?) It's a state.

Ossorio: It's a state. It's an attitude. It's a something. But it's not an emotion. Would you believe, nobody in the ten years that I did that ever mentioned eagerness? [laughter] It should be telling.

(?) What about the notion of jumping for joy and having a party and calling your best friend. Why do people do that?

Ossorio: It's sort of like the logic of conspicuous consumption. Think of the notion of the celebration. One of the things you're celebrating is the fact you're not under the gun. There's nothing you have to do and so you take time out. Either you have a party or you do this or that. You parade your good fortune before your friends. It's a triumphal scene and that connects logically to the fact that it's good fortune. It isn't just an accident that with good fortune you do these things any more than it's an accident that with danger you try to escape. It is somehow logically apt.

(?) Is relief an emotion?

Ossorio: I would think not. And in fact, in the statistics, relief was never mentioned anytime in the class either.

(?) What distinguishes a state as emotional?

Ossorio: Remember I said that the emotional behavior is the lynch pin from whence you generate all of the other emotion concepts. Emotional states are characterized by, number one, by how you get into them, and number two, by what your tendencies are when you are in them. How you get into them is that you have the reality basis for the behavior. And number two is that you haven't successfully engaged in the behavior. So for example, I go into a state of fear if I recognize that I am in danger and if I have not yet done anything to successfully escape. I go into a state of anger if I recognize that I've been provoked and I haven't yet done anything to get even. That's where emotional states fit in.

(?) I'm still confused, as to why being eager wouldn't qualify as an emotional state.

Ossorio: It would qualify as a state, but not as an emotional state. Not just any strong motivation is an emotion.

(?) What about gratitude?

Ossorio: The statistics suggest to me that sometimes there is a point in talking about it as an emotion. I generally tend to be conservative on these matters, and for me the conservative approach is not to consider it as an emotion, but rather a relationship. A is grateful to B. And that in particular cases where you have that relationship, you may have other things which taken together you might say "Yeah, there's a point in saying that's an emotion, or that it is emotion-like."

(?) Does depression count as an emotion?

Ossorio: Depression? No. Depression is another state.

(?) Your original point about joy being good fortune ties in very well to Buddhist Psychology. There's a total overlap for me. In Buddhist thought you try to cultivate your own good fortune. You try to be grateful to everyone for helping you attain enlightenment ...

Ossorio: Sometimes those guys know what they are talking about. [laughter]

(?) Could you say that if you discriminate good fortune and you don't act on it in some way, that creates its own kind of problem?

Ossorio: Yeah. That's why there is an action that is the relevant and appropriate action. And indeed, if you have good fortune and just pretend that it never happened, that probably would generate problems.

Okay, let's move on to happiness and satisfaction. Happiness is something very different. And I guess most people would count it as a state. Certainly you hear the phrase, a state of happiness or a state of unhappiness. And what kind of state or condition is it? When is somebody happy? There's a twofold thing. If you are going to be happy, by and large you've got things the way you want them to be. You don't have any outstanding disasters in your life. I guess those are the two. Number one, things are pretty much the way you want them to be. You have what you want. Number two, there is no countervailing bad stuff to negate it.

You might ask then, "Why is it so hard to achieve?" which it is notoriously.

In clinical work, let me mention two things. One is a slogan. The slogan is, "It's the measuring stick that destroys." And the point of that, is that for something to be satisfactory to you or good as far as you're concerned, you have to evaluate it. And you have to evaluate it against some criterion or standard or essentially a measuring stick. Now we have all kinds of measuring sticks available. Depending on which one we pick, we can generate a wide range of different results. And by and large, at least in clinical work, what I find is that people are not happy because such very bad things happen to them. They are unhappy because they have been using the wrong measuring sticks.

The second one is an image, and it's called "The One-eyed Armenian Grandmother." And that's an explanation of why Reg is such an utter failure. [laughter] Being a one-eyed Armenian grandmother is something that he is now and always will be an absolute failure at. There's no question about it. He is totally hopeless. He will never be even a smidgen of a respectable version of a one-eyed Armenian grandmother. Well, the moral of that story is that you can make anything a failure by measuring it against what it isn't. Put that together with "It's the measuring stick that destroys," and you can see why there could be a lot more unhappiness than there needs to. Now correspondingly, that also gives you clues about how people could be more happy than they are. Get them to use the right measuring sticks.

(?) Can you be happy and not feel happy?

Ossorio: Yes.

(?) How? [laughter]

Ossorio: Let me give you a heuristic that is not quite on happiness but I think it will bring out the point. Remember Bobby Fisher of recent fame? Now suppose that you walk in and Bobby Fisher is playing in a tournament and you tap him on the shoulder and you say, "Do you enjoy playing chess?" And he says, "Yeah." And you look at the board and he's losing and you say, "Well, you're playing chess so you must be enjoying yourself right now." And he gets up and socks you. Apply that to happiness.

(?) At NASA there's a saying "The enemy of good is better."

(?) Say that again.

Ossorio: The enemy of good is better. The way I've heard it is "Don't let the perfect be the enemy of the good."

(?) ... he argues that happiness occurs when a group of significant motives or a significant motive is satisfied. Joy on the other hand, would be when a wide array of personally significant motives are achieved. Happiness is when an aspect of the self participates in the satisfaction. Joy is when the whole self participates.

Ossorio: Yeah. I think he's making much of the same distinction that I did in talking about happiness when I said that things are pretty much the way you want.

(?) But he says that joy is the broader category. And I think in ordinary language it is.

Ossorio: I don't think so. Joy is something that happens at a time, whereas happiness is something that endures for a time. Which reminds me that I haven't talked about satisfaction yet.

(?) Hold on. What are the criterion for ... What makes a measuring stick right?

Ossorio: Nothing. It just is. If you had a case and had all the facts, you could indeed point to things that made it right, but you can always pursue that back and one step back, the answer is "It just is. You can see it." Remember Proof comes to an end. Evidence comes to an end.

(?) [inaudible]

Ossorio: Okay, let's put happiness in a context. The context is the Judgment Diagram. You recall the Judgment Diagram has four types of reasons that people have for doing whatever they do: Hedonic, Prudential, Ethical, Esthetic. Now each of those can be used imperialistically. And I really mean *each* of those. So that, for example, you can say all of these other three are just varieties of hedonic reasons. Or, you can use the second one and say, "All of these others are just variations on self interest." Which is what prudential is. And those are so easy to do, that philosophers have done that. [laughter] Now it's absolutely just as easy to say that all of the other three are variations on the ethical, things being the way they should be. And all of the other three are variations on the esthetic, on things being fitting.

Now once you see that you can do it with any of them, you tend to lose your interest in doing it with any of them. Because what you find is that if you say everything is a different form of self interest, you still have to preserve the distinction between the hedonic type of self interest and the ethical type of self interest, etc. So you haven't gained anything. You've just shuffled things around.

Now in the service of the hedonic version of that, people have pointed to the idea that "After all when you succeed in getting away from the lion, don't you experience pleasure? Of course you do. When you succeed in doing your duty, don't you experience pleasure? Of course you do. See that tells you that all of these are just a variety of pleasure."

Well the answer to that is, "No, you don't experience pleasure. What you experience is satisfaction." When you succeed in getting away from the lion you experience satisfaction, not pleasure. Or not necessarily pleasure. Necessarily satisfaction, maybe sometimes pleasure, but that's probably rare. Certainly when you succeed in doing your duty, you don't experience pleasure. You do experience satisfaction. Because it's no fun to do your duty. There's nothing pleasurable about it. And likewise when you do the appropriate thing, if it's successful you experience satisfaction. So satisfaction is like one of Kohut's things. That's what you experience when a significant motivation is satisfied. You experience satisfaction.

Now notice that these three terms that sound so similar, if you look at the logical map and where they fit, they are not at all close. They are hardly related to each other at all. And yet there is a definite and perfectly good place for each of them.

(?) Are you going to answer the last part of the question, how do you increase the joy in your life? That's my question.

Ossorio: How do people increase the joy in their life? That's where I said, "Use the right measuring stick."

Naming Pete's Stuff

(?) If we were trying to name "Pete's Stuff" today, would you suggest a term other than Descriptive Psychology?

Ossorio: I'm not sure I would, even though I'm not that happy with "Descriptive Psychology". Number one, the operative term is Descriptive. If I'd been an anthropologist, you would be hearing about Descriptive Anthropology. But that would have many of the same problems that "Descriptive Psychology" has, so it's a marginal improvement if any.

(?) Are you having problems with "Descriptive" as the lead word?

Ossorio: I'm not. But the topic has come up half a dozen times in the last few days.

(?) Are there any other candidates?

Ossorio: Bob Brill is working on it. He may come up with something. The intent and why descriptive is the operative word is to contrast with theoretical and explanatory, but primarily theoretical. After all, you can see that there's lots of explanatory power in "Descriptive Psychology". In the full range of sciences, there's a number of them that begin with "Descriptive". And if I were going to anchor Descriptive Psychology anywhere within the sciences, it would be among those whose titles begin with Descriptive.

Now one of the implications of Descriptive Psychology, of the term, is that there is enough there to describe, prior to any attempt at explanation, to constitute a task of sufficient magnitude to call for a separate discipline just to accomplish that task. And I think you can see that is borne out in that Descriptive

Psychology is more complex than any theory in psychology. It has more pieces. It has deeper logic. It extends across more phenomena than anything else you come across. Well, that's what calls for a separate discipline to accomplish it. Because it is not a trivial task. On the other hand, there's no good word that I know of for it.

Now what Bob is working on is, to see if he can finally arrive at a term, is the idea --Oh hay, I've got it -- I was going to use this tomorrow. Wynne, who is the guy who did the work on Wittgenstein? The one who went to Berkeley and is now at Harvard?

Wynne: Cavell.

Ossorio: There's a philosopher named Stanley Cavell. And he was, as I understand it, explaining Wittgenstein's philosophy and trying to explain why it was so different from what had gone before. And he said something, either literally or very close to what I'm about to quote. He said, "For Aristotle, to speak the truth is to say of what is, *that* it is." In this new way of talking he says, "To speak the truth is to say of what is, *what* it is."

Well, you might say that Descriptive Psychology is an attempt to say of what is, namely people, *what* it is. What is a person? And since persons are complex things, saying what a person is, is a complex thing and it's going to come out in reams and reams of paper. And if it's that sort of thing, you better believe that we're better off first having at least a first cut at a description before we go around trying to explain things. And what history has shown is that most of the things that psychologists have done in their theories to try to explain things are simply more or less crude approximations of some portion of Descriptive that simply says what the thing is. So there was a strong polemic intent in calling it Descriptive Psychology. And I hope Bob finds a better term.

(?) I usually get mileage from telling people that what DP is, is a pre-empirical, nontheoretical approach that you have to do before you can do psychology in the ordinary sense of doing experiments.

Ossorio: Well that's what Bob is dealing with. What that invites is the same kind of response as saying that "Faith is knowledge without evidence."

(?) I point out that Descriptive Psychology is a species of conceptual system ... But that's no different than saying what is psychoanalysis or what is Gestalt psychology.

Ossorio: There are conceptual systems and there are conceptual systems. Most of them are theories. A pre-empirical, nontheoretical something is going to show important differences from theories. And only in the abstract principle are there a million ways to do it, because right now there's only one.

(?) Yeah, Descriptive Psychology is a pre-empirical, nontheoretical psychology. There may be other ways of doing it, but this is the one we've got.

Ossorio: The Psychology part [of Descriptive Psychology] - Remember that this was introduced in the context of psychology, and usually what you do is you introduce a formulation that says, here's what I take the phenomenon to be, and then you study it, in one way or another. So that eventually you do the things that psychologists do with it. But what you first do, is do justice to the phenomenon. You don't study something fictitious. You study what you take it actually to be.

(?) Are there any other candidates for a name that are not totally distasteful?

Ossorio: There haven't been many candidates that you would take seriously.

(?) What are some of the ones you've considered?

Ossorio: The Person Concept is something I've used from way back partly as an alternative to calling it Descriptive Psychology. There's a place for both of those. That's why they've both survived.

I take it that the Person concept is something that we all have. Just like the English language is something that we all have without knowing that we have it at the time we acquired it, without having good descriptions of it. So, the person concept is that sort of thing. That's what is common to all of us. And the primary task of Descriptive Psychology is to formulate the Person Concept.

I see a parallel to the problem of the grammarian to write the grammar of English, when everybody knows how to talk English. But writing the grammar of English is a very different sort of task, and very difficult. And yet if there wasn't a grammar of English, there would be no point in trying to write it. So where they fit is that the Person concept is what we share and what makes us persons. And Descriptive Psychology is one of the things that can attempt to formulate that.

(?) What about the idea that Descriptive Psychology isn't psychology?

Ossorio: It is and it isn't. It's designed to give you access to everything about people. And in that sense it's Psychology. On the other hand it's not restricted to that. In that sense it's not just a psychology and not just an anthropology. It's more on the order of an intellectual discipline. Think of the State of Affairs System and the applications to computing and physical phenomena. You can't restrict its application. It covers everything.

(?) [inaudible]

Ossorio: Remember I said the Person Concept. What would you think of the "Three System System"? [laughter] Now you know why I want to keep it quiet. That appears in *Meaning and Symbolism*.

Future of Descriptive Psychology

(?) What do you see as the future of Descriptive Psychology?

(?) Descriptive Psychology does not seem to be catching on, in spite of the impacts it could have in many areas. What are your thoughts on this, and any possible solutions?

(?) What are effective ways for Descriptive Psychology applications to problems to continue for the next twenty years?

(?) What are some promising ways to save Descriptive Psychology, to make sure it doesn't disappear along with us?

(?) An endangered species...

Ossorio: We may not have to worry about that. Remember "The evil that men do lives after them." [laughter]

As you can see there is a core area of questions about the future. Roughly speaking, I would start by saying that the key is to spread the competence. That's what is important to survive, the competence to work with

the system. And in particular it doesn't do us any good to get a thousand new members who know nothing about Descriptive. That's not the way I would recommend going. The issue is "How can you spread the competence?"

Secondly, part of how you make sure the thing survives, is to find significant problems and solve them. And I'm happy to see that I think I detect a trend in that direction. I agree that nobody out there is interested in another system per se. We've got systems coming out of our ears. So what is going to differentiate DP is that people can use it to solve problems that they can't solve, or solve as easily or efficiently in other ways. The work that Pat mentioned this afternoon is a good example. Those guys are in trouble and they know it. He's got a potential solution, and he's not going to be shy about letting them know that if it works, it came from DP.

So those are the two ingredients that I see as key. One is spreading the competence and the other is going after significant problems and solving them. You are not going to be able to go after significant problems if you don't have a body of competence.

Beyond that, a lot of situational stuff. There's windows of opportunities for this and that, and there's trends this way and trends that way, and difficulties of various sorts. I just don't have too much to say about those.