

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.

Out of Darkness

Ossorio: I've looked at the first two, and since I think they're reasonably easy to answer, I'll answer them before I go on to looking at the rest. The first one says "You said that 'the infant lives in the darkness of inexperience'. At what point does the infant move out of that darkness, and how do you as an Observer recognize when it occurs?"

Probably the best answer is that there is no point at which the infant moves out. If you think of simply a gradual improvement over time, starting from near zero up through as high a level of competence as the infant is ever going to achieve, there are no discontinuities you might say that you can point to and say "At that point things changed". All you can say is he gets better and better.

Or you can say if you reach that endpoint of the ideal or normative level of competence, reaching that point is potentially that breakpoint. And you can say, when he reaches that point, that's when he's moved out of the darkness of inexperience. Up to that point there is still some of that darkness; there is still some of that lack.

Now the question of how you recognize it, the answer is you may not. Particularly if you haven't reached that point, you probably won't.

The other answer to that, by the way, is the old clinical answer, "It all depends." [laughter]

The Done Thing

Ossorio: "On the equivalence of deliberate action and participation in social practices, think of behaviors like torturing a cat, picking one's nose, and biting one's nails. All are intelligible. All are Deliberate Actions. But are they the done things in a community? Are they participations in social practices?"

Two things. The notion of the 'done thing' is susceptible to a bad interpretation, namely, that it's commonly done. And I think that's what lies behind this question. These things are not commonly done in the community. But a social practice doesn't have to be commonly done. It just has to exist there.

Now the other thing is remember what I said today about the systematic possibilities. They are not common behaviors, but aren't they obviously possibilities within the range of possibilities of human life? Of course. So when I said today that that explanation is more fundamental because it's more systematic, it gives entrée to a broader range of things... Remember I said "Yeah, it's stretching a little to say that every individual behavior has to be part of a pattern", and here's a case in point. But if you think in terms of the systematic possibilities, then there's no issue here.

The Memory of an Elephant

Ossorio: "Putting aside biological considerations, are there any Descriptive notions that can account for why some people remember events in their lives very clearly, while others remember poorly?"

Just think about that. How would you explain that? If somebody just asked you, "Why do some people remember things in their lives and other people can hardly remember any?" what kinds of answers could you possibly give?

Audience: It seems like two things. One is that it's important enough for them to remember. And the other is that they were attending to them at the time.

Ossorio: Okay.

Audience: Or that some people have good memories and some people don't.

Ossorio: There you go. This is one of the things that some people are better at than others. That's where you start. You know that that's true and you can bring that explanation to bear here.

But here again, it all depends. Some cases, once you say that, you've answered it. Other cases you say that and you've still got questions. And so, what else can you do? Well, things like "For this person the events were more important", is a possibility. There are various auxiliary explanations, so it all depends. But you can easily think of a range of possible explanations and say "It just depends on the particular case. What kinds of facts are at issue?"

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A Fifth Major Piece

Ossorio: "What do you think about community being the fifth major piece of the Person Concept or subsuming the language concept?" I'm not sure whether the reference to language is a separate question or a redo of the first. Let me just deal with the first. "What do you think about community being the fifth major piece of the Person Concept?"

That has potential. As I've organized things in the book, there's the four major pieces and then from those pieces, we either derive or introduce a number of subsidiary concepts. But the second major section is "Introducing the Real World Context", and that's where you bring in communities, world views, Actor-Observer-Critic, and a whole bunch of things like that.

Well, if you took that whole section, you say "Yeah. If language, person, reality, and behavior are the first four components, then maybe this whole extra section is a fifth component." But it doesn't fit right. It doesn't feel right because you got there via those first four. So I'd handle them as a derivation rather than a coordinate fifth piece. But as you can see, it's a close cry and if you really want to work it that way, you could probably carry it off.

As I say, what's this about "subsuming the language concept"? Do you mean in place of language?

Audience: Language is a parameter of community, so you could just put the parametric analysis of language into community and have four basic concepts, the fourth of which is community instead of language. Language would be a parameter of community.

Ossorio: I think you'll find that all four of the basic concepts are going to be parameters of community. Remember: Community has a world; that's reality. Community has members; that's people. Community has social practices; that's behavior. So you've got those basic components in the notion of community.

Audience: As it is, it tends not to suggest that whole range of study, for instance, that the social sciences cover, which presumably Descriptive Psychology can encompass, where you're always dealing with things at a combined level. As a matter of public relations...[laughter]

Ossorio: One of the reasons why I say that you could probably carry it off somehow, even though I doubt that it's optimum, is that you deal with the four basic concepts. They don't somehow add up to community. You need to introduce the notion of community, even though it's a community of individual people. So you can say "Yeah. There's an irreducible something that's contributed by community. It isn't just derivative from these four." And then work it that way.

A lot of this stuff is simply "This is how *I* feel like doing it." You need to be sensitive to that because it could have been done a different way.

Audience: Pete, I hear you clarifying those distinctions right now. Would you say that what you're drawing upon is the use of those concepts? In other words... Let me just put it more basic. What is it you're drawing upon as you make those sets of distinctions right now?

Ossorio: I'm a competent baseball player. [laughter]

Audience: And those concepts have a place in the Person Concept?

Ossorio: Yeah.

Audience: And you are clarifying that place?

Ossorio: Yeah. This is how the thing works.

Audience: Isn't it more than that? It's not just that you're a competent baseball player, because not any competent baseball player could do that at all. It's that you know how to write the rules.

Ossorio: I'm a good grammarian, too.

Audience: To me, that's the whole point. Anybody can recognize that "That's a competent baseball player." "Yeah, that makes sense." But only a few people can actually write the grammar.

Ossorio: You know, a lot of it is what I call craftsmanship. No different from being a carpenter and building something where everything fits and everything is tight, etc. When you're trying to represent a system and it isn't already there, that everybody knows it, craftsmanship is one of the standards. Can you get all of the pieces into the picture that you need? Can you get them to fit together in the way that they need to in order to work the way we know that have to work?

So when I say "Yeah. You could carry it off somehow", essentially I'm saying "Yeah. But you'd probably pay a price aesthetically in how the whole thing was put together, in how tight it was." But it doesn't have to be perfect in order to work.

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How I Got into the Business

Ossorio: "What led you to start developing the Person Concept?" In a sense the answer is very simple, namely, total dissatisfaction with the state of the art in psychology. Total dissatisfaction with the nature of the explanations... Total dissatisfaction with the research methodology and the rationales for it.

And when I say "total dissatisfaction", I mean I sat there and laughed. [laughter] I simply couldn't take it seriously. And I said "There's got to be a better way." Out of the dissatisfaction came...

And as you can see, in terms of being a competent player of the game, which we all are, one of the major things is you need the motivation to go do something like this. If you have it, lots of people could have done it. Without that motivation, you just go along and do things the way they've been done. So I would count that motivation as the major thing about how come I got into the business.

Audience: Pete, I don't know how/if others can tolerate this, but you had mentioned to me that you hold a little bit on Frege and some of your thoughts about Wittgenstein's early work. Were those pieces that you had laying on your desk, so to speak, that kind of inched you toward making something like the Person Concept?

Ossorio: No. They were influential at certain points in *why* I did it the way I did it, but they weren't what got me started. I was started before I ever read Wittgenstein. Not before I read Frege, but before I read Wittgenstein.

However, Frege was more directly responsible for a piece than Wittgenstein was. The piece that he was responsible for is the Reality Concept. The Transition Rules in the Reality Concept were explicitly, consciously patterned after Frege's Axioms of Set Theory. Remember those axioms that start with " $a = a$ ", " $a + b = b + a$ "? What I thought was, "We need something that simple and fundamental having to do with the real world in order to have the piece we need." So those Transition Rules I hope have that same kind of simple quality, but fundamental. And that was very conscious.

Audience: And could you tell us...

Ossorio: By the way, I did it in about an hour.

Audience: I was just going to ask, could you place it a little bit? Where were you sitting at the time you did it? [laughter] I'm just curious. Did you have Scotch on the desk?

Ossorio: No.

Audience: Before you leave this one, since you brought up the massive dissatisfaction, do you have any explanation for why this massive dissatisfaction has not occurred to more people? This specifically bothers me because I've been reading a lot of the science and religion literature, and why the same sorts of dissatisfaction have not cropped up among these people who are concerned with the place where they need it...

Ossorio: Yeah. In a word, I think there is that kind of dissatisfaction, but it takes a different form. And it takes the form of being victimized. I was never a victim. Lots of people feel the burden of that. Lots of people are hurting from it, and they know it. But what they don't have is that fighting spirit that says "Go kill the bastards." [laughter]

Now it isn't just a matter of fighting spirits. I had a lot of background in a lot of things. I spent seventeen years in college. And a lot of it was just auditing classes of various sorts -- lots of philosophy, some linguistics, some math, lots of psychology. And some of it, a fair amount of it, I learned from experts, so that I wasn't about to be browbeaten by second hand guys in psychology who were simply retailing what the real guys -- the philosophers, the mathematicians, the linguists -- were saying as original work.

Because of that, I wasn't stopped by the usual borders where most people would say, "Well, I don't know anything about that. That's linguistics." "I don't know anything about that. That's mathematics." "That's philosophy." I said "To hell with it. Here it is."

Audience: Are there other people doing the Person Concept outside of psychology but more just in philosophy?

Ossorio: More what?

Audience: Are there other individuals articulating the Person Concept in a similar or roughly equivalent way not in psychology but in philosophy?

Ossorio: Yeah. But that's in philosophy, and what you wind up with is some philosophy.

Audience: And that never makes it over into psychology?

Ossorio: Yeah. It never makes it over into linguistics. It never makes it into reality. Now one form of that broad background is that it gave me the confidence to use my common sense. Common sense is what covers all of that ground.

Audience: [showing Pete something]

Ossorio: [laughing] The return of the repressed.

Audience: My first year in grad school you gave me that. That was the first thing I got. That was clear. Everything else was fuzzy in my mind.

Ossorio: Well, as you can see, there's a lot of historical accident. It's not just a matter of methodology.

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Disagreements about the Game

Ossorio: "Baseball players have no disagreements about the rules of the game they're playing. Human beings have great disagreements about the game we're playing, e.g. we're really organisms. Why the disparity?"

What do you think?

Audience: Will you read that again?

Ossorio: "Baseball players have no disagreements about the rules of the game they're playing." By the way, they do but not much. "Human beings have great disagreements about the game they're playing, e.g. the issue we're really organisms. Why the disparity?"

Audience: Well, for one thing there are lots of cultures.

Ossorio: Lots of cultures.

Audience: I think we're a lot more complicated.

Ossorio: Yeah, in a word, human life is much more complicated than baseball. There's a lot more substance to it, a lot more depth. [laughter] It has more substance, more depth, a hell of a lot more systematic possibilities.

Audience: If you bring it down to checkers and tic-tac-toe, it gets simpler. Are there...

Ossorio: And by the way, remember the disagreements are simply another example of the working of those systematic possibilities. It's not as though that's an exception. That's just another set of possibilities within the game.

Audience: And even if they're having disagreements, there's a great deal of common ground prior to that that they do agree on.

Ossorio: Remember you have to share concepts in order to either agree or disagree about facts.

Audience: So they might disagree about whether or not the guy's safe, but they share the concept of "safe" or "out".

Ossorio: I can't think of any interesting answer other than that. They're simply... they're just not comparable.

Audience: What I was wondering, Pete, if there is a game that might approximate the human condition game.

Ossorio: No. That's one of the reasons you can't really do this in terms of rules. If it were a game, if it were a lot like a game, I think you'd be able to do it in terms of the rules and literally just write the rules of the game.

But if you think of the nature of the four components of the Person Concept -- behavior, language, reality, and individual person -- and you look at how you articulate those -- one with a parametric analysis, another with a parametric analysis, another with a calculational system, and a third with a combination -- you say, "What's the net possibilities of all of those?"

It does not come out like a simple set of rules. Even one thing like baseball that does have a set of rules -- look how many different possibilities there are. And once you put together something that has these disparate pieces, and the logic is disparate, and some of them are calculational systems that give you infinite products, others you have essentially infinite ways of having human characteristics (that is, the number of possible Person Characteristics is essentially infinite), then you're dealing with a very broad range of things.

Audience: What strikes me is that, I guess in baseball, baseball players never misinterpret the rules.

Ossorio: If you've ever seen a sandlot baseball game, what you'll find out is that when they're learning *not* by having learned the rules first, there *is* disagreement. There are negotiations.

Audience: And you can change the rules of the game, too.

Ossorio: And they can change the rules.

Audience: You can't change them.

Ossorio: Changing the rules is simply one of the possibilities for people.

Audience: [inaudible]

Audience: Metaphorically, there's a bent to talk about it as a rule-following approach in contrast to?

Ossorio: The contrast is to law-like.

Audience: Law-like?

Ossorio: Law-like. And it falls on the rule-following side. Rules, games, etc. have a very strong heuristic value because they are essentially the same kind of thing. But if you go for the real thing and not just heuristics, I think I gave you some arguments for why you have to do it in terms of concepts.

And what that gives you is a tremendous set of systematic possibilities, and the key is that they are *systematic* possibilities. And the key is to represent them as systematic. Everybody knows that human life has unbounded possibilities. But if all you can do is throw up your arms and say, "Gee. There's no limit.", that isn't going to get you very far. If you can formulate the rules that generate all those possibilities, you've got a much more powerful handle on it. You also make it all more intelligible.

Audience: A lot more what?

Ossorio: Intelligible. By the way, one of the things that I left out: Remember that I said that between persons, it's generally I and Thou? Now think of the baseball example. One of the

things you can say is that not only is one baseball player not inherently mysterious to another baseball player. Every baseball player has a fellow feeling for every other baseball player. They are fellow baseball players.

Well, transport that notion into the arena of persons. Every person has a fellow feeling for another person. And that's the essence of I and Thou.

Audience: Pete, the other thing is that in a baseball game, there is no move of declaring what the rules are.

Ossorio: No, not as part of baseball.

Audience: That's right. In the context of a game, the rules are already there, and there is no move of declaring what a rule is and what the rules of the game are. They are already there a priori. Where I guess in the human condition one of our moves is to discuss our rules and to talk about what our rules are.

Ossorio: Yeah, but that doesn't change the rules.

Audience: I understand that...

Ossorio: That's just another move in the game.

Audience: But that's a factor that generates the confusion and disagreements among humans.

Ossorio: Yeah, but there are all kinds of other things that generate disagreements, too. That's not special I don't think in that respect. It's simply that in this game one of the things you can do is argue about the game. You can discuss the game. You can try to formulate the rules of the game. If you think you've got them, you can change them. But all of that is within the set of possibilities that were *already* there.

Audience: I guess I'm confused. What are you saying about rules for humans, for people?

Ossorio: Nothing. [laughter]

Audience: No wonder I was getting confused.

Ossorio: Remember I keep saying, "You can't really do it in terms of rules."

Audience: You're saying it's law-like, though.

Ossorio: No. That's what it's *not*. A rule-following thing contrasts to law-like things. Physics is law-like -- theoretical [physics]. People are not that.

Audience: But what about things like customs?

Ossorio: They're not law-like.

Audience: No. But in terms of rules of interaction, they're some that one would say decent, civilized people follow. Certain customs, not exactly rules, but norms and customs. If one of us stood up here and said "I can't stand you, and I think you're a jerk" in front of everyone, we'd all think that was a breach of something -- etiquette. There are some things that we do expect people to go along with.

Ossorio: Yeah, but [change tape].

Audience: But there are still customs to be followed, and in general, we expect people to follow them.

Ossorio: That's right. But that doesn't make them inevitable. People break the rules routinely.

Audience: And in a baseball game, too.

Ossorio: Yeah. And then they're not playing baseball.

Audience: I wish I could get away with breaking the rules in a baseball game.

Ossorio: That's right. What could be more human? [laughter]

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In a Dramaturgical Pattern

Ossorio: "When did you add 'in a dramaturgical pattern' to the definition of a Person? Why?"

This is another one of those things where I could have talked about the impact on the existing formulation. It seems to me that in recent years, I've talked about the dramaturgical model, so that just that notion should not be strange to most people. Now there's another consideration, and it comes back to the definition of pathology and also the definition of a person as an individual who paradigmatically has a history of Deliberate Action. And then there's the notion of a definition within a system vs. a simple, isolated definition.

And here's the thing: within a system you can define things in a way that isn't really true and get away with it. For example, if I were just doing it in isolation, I would *not* define a person as an individual whose history is paradigmatically a history of Deliberate Action, because there's more to it than that. However, since other parts of the system guarantee the remaining parts, you only need this much to generate the concept of a person if you stay within the system. If you don't, if you're just introducing it ad hoc, then you've got to include all of these things somehow.

And again it's a matter of taste or aesthetic judgment how much you do include. If you've got some choice that you can leave some things out and include other things in, how much do you include? Well, the introduction of the dramaturgical model I thought was important enough to bring that in and include that in the definition.

And as far as when I did that, the answer is "Today". [laughter] That's why I gave it a pregnant pause before I said that. Yeah, this is the first time I've made that official.

Audience: And you're using dramaturgical *pattern*?

Ossorio: Yeah. Dramaturgical pattern is based on the model of a social practice. It's an episode. And that's what human life consists of, is this kind of episode. The discussion of self-concept depended on that, that you live your life not just engaged in this Deliberate Action followed by another one followed by another one. What you're living is meaningful patterns of Deliberate Actions. And the closest approximation we have is a social practice. So that's what I mean by a dramaturgical pattern. You have to have *that* kind of history, not just a history of Deliberate Action.

Okay. Any questions about that?

Audience: Hasn't there been more to the dramaturgical pattern when you've talked about it before, or am I confusing different...?

Ossorio: Well, there's more to the dramaturgical model, and I'm drawing on that when I talk about a dramaturgical pattern.

Audience: Okay.

Audience: Could you say real briefly what the use of the term 'dramaturgical' -- There's the little core piece 'drama' there -- what that adds to it particularly? Are there any other terms that might come close to doing justice to it? What's prominent and good about the term 'dramaturgical'?

Ossorio: Well, dramaturgical model is what I have adopted as a name for that particular model, but it's not accidental that I call it 'dramaturgical'. Because the terminology, the most explicitly worked out versions of that kind of thing, come from drama. And if you have five minutes, I bet you could say why.

Audience: Why?

Ossorio: Remember what drama is.

Audience: You haven't given us five minutes.

Ossorio: Drama has to do with the lives of people. So when you have a discipline designed to analyze this and organize it, guess what? What could be a better way of organizing the lives of real people?

Audience: ‘Dramaturgical’ is a status in the theatre community. It’s the status of a person who’s not a playwright or a director or anything, but who says "What is this story? What’s going on here?" to clarify that for people so they would have a better sense of how to put on this play or what it’s about.

Ossorio: Yeah, other people have used the term ‘dramaturgical’, and they’ve done the same kind of thing. They’ve borrowed from drama some of the analytic apparatus. You know they’ve been made fun of for that, but as I say, what would you pick as the best set of analytic tools if not tools that were expressly designed to deal with the lives of people, if that’s what you’re interested in?

Audience: Pete, I think it’s worth adding that it’s not just the lives of people. It’s also about things that matter.

Ossorio: Yeah. If you think about what a drama is, it’s not just a sample in the lives of some possible somebody. If it’s a good drama, those episodes are meaningful in a way that most days in the life of an ordinary person are not. That’s one reason why drama is one of the things that gives us access to the systematic possibilities that we would never encounter in real life. They in effect are specifically picked out and designed for that.

Audience: Why hadn’t you added the dramaturgical model until today? I mean in a dramaturgical manner. I’m not saying it right.

Audience: Pattern.

Ossorio: Because I never had occasion to. [laughter]

Audience: Aw cmon.

Audience: But I mean it begins to sound like a necessary ingredient.

Ossorio: Well, that’s what I’m saying by putting it in. But look, the last paper I wrote was about three years ago and it was a paper on ontology. There’s simply no place to put that in. Before that it was the one on self-concept, but that’s a chapter in the book. It’s not generally published. So when would I have put it in? I’ve talked to people, and officially I did it today. It’s been in there for some time, but this was the first occasion in which it made sense to make it public, you might say.

Audience: Walter says it’s okay. [laughter]

Culture and Character

Ossorio: This is sort of borderline as to whether one could answer it to good effect or not. Let me read it. "Are there significant changes in our culture that lead to less moral sensitivity of a positive set of ways of living to develop character?"

The fast answer is "No." Period. The explanation is this: Character is character, and people will develop a character almost no matter what. So the notion that there are ways of living or cultural influences that make for less character development is almost incoherent. No matter what the influences are, *almost* no matter what the influences are, people are going to develop some kind of character. And that's why the fast answer is "No."

Now what's implicit here is the notion of a *good* character.

Audience: Yeah.

Audience: Right.

Ossorio: And that's a different kettle of fish. If you think of good character, my inclination would be to say "Yes". I'm not sure I would fight for that to the bitter end but I can give you some reasons for going that route.

If you think of some of the developments in the culture in the last say, 40 years, 20 years, one of the main things that you think of is sort of a cultural relativity and the whole social reconstruction or the social construction movement, which connects to relativity. If there's a lot of that in the culture, then you lose the criteria for a good character, and you lose a lot of the kind of influences that would have made for a good character had you had a good criteria for it.

And so on those grounds I would say "Yeah. We have lost something. It is harder to develop a good character now than it was 40 years ago." On the other hand it's nowhere near impossible. But I think it is harder.

Audience: I think a lot of novelists have spoken to this issue. *The Lord of the Flies* springs to mind as a negative example, of *not* developing good character. And I think probably I can think of a few science fiction stories where people tried to go the other way and think of an environment in which things went better and good character was developed.

Audience: But there's a cyclical... I read quotes from 100 years ago, 500 years ago, and Roman times, and Greek times.

Ossorio: No.

Audience: And it sounded just like they were describing today. It's periods of changing times, transition times.

Ossorio: Well, you have to sort of parcel out that sort of thing. The world is always going to hell in a hand basket. The younger generation is never good enough. That's kind of constant. That's a generational difference.

Audience: And it's true. [laughter]

Ossorio: And you can expect that routinely. I'm thinking of something over and above that, and the kind of differences in the direction of relativism are something over and above that. It's not just generational differences.

Audience: I think the notion of a person has changed in ways that are harmful. Like Jim Holmes talked about in his paper about science and how it -- to put it simply and crassly -- a person can be viewed as a bundle of chemicals, etc., etc. The notion of a person has been debased in many quarters. Do you think that's a significant trend?

Ossorio: Yeah. That's part of the trend that I was talking about this afternoon when I talked about the humanities being demoralized. They didn't know how to defend their ground.

Audience: Technology can move with no limit on its speed, and cultural change to adapt to what happens from technology doesn't move much faster than it ever did, so that this warp speed technology does seem to create an impossible situation.

Ossorio: Yeah. And it's not just technology. It's knowledge also. Knowledge has become institutionalized. It's not just a figure of speech to speak of universities as "knowledge factories". And the more there is of something, usually the less it's valued. That's an old principle of economics -- supply and demand.

But I think it's the vision of what a human being is that has suffered the debasement. That's where the rubber meets the road. The others are influences in this direction or that, but where the payoff is is "What is your picture of what a person is?" And if it's that a person is an organism or a person is a pile of chemicals that are cleverly put together, it's not worth much.

And why that's an almost inevitable result of the ascendancy of science is that science as we have it today is based on a metaphysics of determinism and materialism and naturalism. In none of those is there a place for a human being. From the very beginning there is no place for a human being. So it's not surprising that in the end there is no place for a human being in *any* of that.

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Physiological Underpinnings

Ossorio: "Do you have any objections to formulations that emphasize physiological underpinnings to temperament?"

I have objections to talking about physiological underpinnings of *anything*. [laughter] If you want to talk about physiological concomitants, that's a different question. Now one of the set of possibilities... You know I talked about systematic possibilities being the basis for moving from the non-empirical to the empirical. Once you have the possibilities, then you look to see which of them are true.

Well, the Person Concept formulation, even from an early stage, did that for physiology. When we talk about embodiment, that provides a place and a wide open set of possibilities for what's the relationship between things that go on in your body and anything else that's of interest, like temperament, like behavior, like pathology, etc. And all you gotta do is then empirically go find out what some of those connections are.

What's this talk about underpinnings? That's pure polemics. That's ideology.

Audience: Could you elaborate on that a bit? Think of brain damage and problems of behavior, judgment, cognition, etc.

Ossorio: What about it?

Audience: Underpinnings or concomitant?

Ossorio: Neither.

Audience: Predisposition?

Ossorio: Neither. Its fits a different pattern altogether. You're talking about pathology now.

Let me give you a model. As an ordinary human being, I can reach and pick up things, and I can pick up something and throw it, and that's part of my natural human existence. If you cut off my arms, I can't do that anymore. Why? Because using my arms is the only way I have of doing that. If you take that away, then I can't do it. If you do less than that, for example, if you chop me up a little, then maybe I can do it but I do it badly.

Now anything that goes on in your brain fits that pattern. The things that go on in our brains are the only ways that we have of doing certain things. They're the performance aspect of it.

Audience: They're the performance aspect of it?

Ossorio: Yeah. And if you prevent me from doing something in the only way that I have, you prevent me from doing it. But now turn science fictionist and say, "Let's imagine that engineering has improved and anything that you can take away from me by way of brain injury, one of my engineering friends can give me a substitute and I can then do just as well." What then? Are you going to say that the neurology was essential? That it was an underpinning? No. It's simply the way I do it.

Audience: Aliens do it different.

Ossorio: Yeah. If you had a robot, you'd know you'd do it in a different way.

Audience: I'm sorry. Again, a robot what?

Ossorio: Would do it in a different way. Even if he had a brain, his brain wouldn't work the way ours do.

Audience: Interestingly you would never be talking about underpinnings.

Ossorio: No, no. That's why I say that's pure ideology. Keep your eye on the facts.

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Empirically-based Psychotherapy

Ossorio: This thing says, "How might Descriptive Psychology cogently refute the current trend of evidence-based, empirically-based psychotherapy?"

I'm a little out of touch. I'm not sure just what's going on today. I have a general sense but I'm not in close enough touch to be able to say much about that.

Now I will say that I have nothing against empirically based research on psychotherapy. If you're going to justify doing therapy in a certain way, either you better have a damn good argument or some good empirical evidence, or both preferably.

So the only issue is what kind of therapy are they doing these days and how successful is it, and that I don't know much about. My impression is that it's not that successful but I could be wrong. My sense is also that here and there, there are therapies that are quite successful within some limit. So maybe we're making progress. But as far as refuting it, I don't know.

Audience: I didn't write the question, but the trend is that just because somebody feels better, that's not good enough. You have to be able to find an attractive way to describe that. Their ways of measuring it may be different from some of what we would consider valid and equal.

Audience: You have to write everything in behavioral terms, basically "objective".

Audience: Only certain things count as outcome measures.

Audience: Behaviors and symptoms.

Audience: But the broader thing here is simply the notion that you ought not to be doing *any* therapy that hasn't been empirically demonstrated to be effective.

Ossorio: If that were true, you would never do therapy. Period. Because the first time you try it, it has not been proven. What are you going to do?

Audience: That's their justification for not paying for it. [Laughter]

Audience: That's a money thing.

Ossorio: Follow the money.

Audience: On the other hand if you decide to take advantage of this, and take your approach and think it through carefully and you know it works, it's already developed and you do an empirical study. You're one of those very few people who have empirical verification, so you're the only thing they can use that someone will pay for. I know a couple of people who are working in that direction for that very reason.

Ossorio: Like I say, follow the money.

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A Virtuous Person

Ossorio: "Could you talk about what is a virtuous person? Why is there not some virtue in doing the right thing? Couldn't doing the right thing eventually lead to just doing what's right because you're participating with others in an almost right way?"

What's a virtuous person?

Audience: It doesn't require doing the right thing. Maybe it requires attempting to do the right thing, wanting to do the right thing.

Ossorio: Look. Virtue is associated with character. When you're talking virtue, you're talking character. You're not talking skills. You're not talking this, that, and the other. You're talking about character. Now in order to talk about virtue, you have to have some ideal of character. Somebody whose character is of the right kind is virtuous -- of the right kind in certain designated ways.

Remember somewhere there is a [list of virtues](#). I don't know what they are, but there is that list. Now the particular one in question with Sonja was moral virtue. [Pete is referring to Sonja Holt's presentation earlier in the day on "The Competence Paradox in Moral and Ethical Judgment."]

Remember what she said. If it comes from your character, that behavior is virtuous. If you routinely do that, you have that virtue in your character. If you do it for some ulterior motive, then you're not really doing this, so there's no issue of that being virtuous that way. What the

ulterior motive is may lead you to talk about some other virtue, but not this one. Even if the ulterior motive is such a respectable-sounding thing as wanting to do the right thing.

Audience: If you have not been in such a circumstance where the virtue in question is something you could readily exercise, but you have that character of being the sort of person who certainly would do that if it were called for, then you're virtuous without having done the right thing.

Ossorio: That's true. On the other hand, if you want to claim that in fact for a given somebody, you're going to get asked "Well, how do you know?" The best evidence is the behavior. But you're right, if the occasion for it never arose, you could be virtuous that way without ever having shown it. After all, the guy standing by the pond five minutes before he saved the kid, what evidence could you have had?

Audience: Saving the kid didn't make him virtuous. He already was virtuous.

Ossorio: No. That's right.

Audience: I think there are also problems that get going with some of the politically correct pressures that there are on people...

Ossorio: Yeah. That just supplies a whole lot of ulterior motives.

Audience: Right. And sometimes somebody may be doing it just plain straightforwardly out of character and virtue, but feel compelled to describe it according to a perceived formulation.

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