

THE SOUND OF IMPLICATION

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As anyone who is involved in PCP, I have always found a recurrent but unpublished reference: Hinkle, 1965. Reading after reading it seemed like a Zen koan, a precept saying “try to reach the un-reachable” or a Master asking what is “the sound of just one hand”. Many authors talked about laddering and pyramiding techniques and so on, and all of them started from the same mysterious reference: Hinkle, 1965. So I was hypothesizing that one hand groans the ‘sound without sound’, and Hinkle was like a constructivist metaphor of an un-reachable past knowledge.

However I am a very sceptical man and I like to see things for myself. I emailed and asked Fay Fransella about Hinkle’s dissertation: she had it! It really does exist, but inexplicably it is unpublished. Fransella scanned the dissertation with her peculiar enthusiasm and decided to share it with me and “everyone who wants”. That’s how I got it and started reading ‘Hinkle, 1965’.

At first I thought it was a real ‘constructivist’ writing-thinking style. It was witty, always debating all the premises and conclusions. A pure Kellian approach, that for me means be ever-ready to overcome and imbricate Kelly himself. The most unexpected thing was the evident, immediate implications of this ‘viewpoint’. It seemed like the dark side of my Kellian moon: I was no more indulging in constructivist epistemology, I was thinking in terms of personal daily life. That dissertation worked with all the things were happening around me. In a nutshell ‘implications’, ‘implicative dilemmas’ became a core construct, both professional and personal one.

Hinkle ‘arrived’ when I was outlining some group-sessions for primary and secondary school teachers. The promoters wanted something about bullying, a bombastic, empty word that probably

means: “there is something wrong with students, they scare me”. I was very dubious. How can I decide who is the bully and what is the proper way to deal with him/her? I decided to shorten Hinkle’s procedure and to let teachers talk. After some pyramiding techniques, we explored constructions about self-as-a-teacher, student-for-teacher, teacher-for-student and so on, identifying and elaborating implicative dilemmas. When I explained core assumptions of Hinkle’s dissertation, teachers naturally chose to talk in terms of ‘I-Me’ rather than ‘They-Them’. After a while I was taking notes, making clear who was the expert.

In the meantime I was re-construing some stories of persons I met in Cancer Units, as psychologist and as friend. Implications theory vividly portrays personal narratives as choices in front of illness and death. I was seeing something that lively describes what complaints are for cyberneticians. Patients, relatives, health-professionals, friends, we all have the ‘right’ construction of living, suffering, dying. When it seems we’re blind or imposing our own judgments, we’re ourselves. We often don’t see what others call dilemmas, we just live in the space of our Self.

Maybe our covert implicative dilemmas are really the sound without sound.

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