

Alfred Korzybski Memorial Lecture

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HUMAN RELATIONS IN INDUSTRY: A PROBLEM OF COMMUNICATION

I wish to pay my tribute to Alfred Korzybski tonight in a way I feel he would have understood, namely, by trying to apply rather than by talking about his ideas and concepts. For some time now I have been interested in the process of interpersonal communication in the administrative setting. What is taking place when two people engaged in a common task interact? What do the actors involved in such interpersonal proceedings perceive is taking place, and what is a useful way for the executive to think about these interpersonal proceedings in which he is engaged?

I have chosen to discuss these questions in terms of a concrete case - a case of misunderstanding between two people - a worker and a foreman - in an industrial plant. This case I hope will be useful in providing us with a point of departure as well as a point of return for our questions.

THE CASE OF HART AND BING*

In a department of a large industrial organization there were seven workers (four men and three women) engaged in testing and inspecting panels of electronic equipment. In this department one of the workers, Bing, was having trouble with his immediate supervisor, Hart, who had formerly been a worker in the department. Had we been observers in this department we would have seen Bing carrying two or three panels at a time from the racks where they were stored to the bench where he inspected them together. For this activity we would have seen him charging double or triple setup time. We would have heard him occasionally singing at work. Also we would have seen him leaving his work position a few minutes early to go to lunch and that other employees sometimes accompanied him. Had we been present we also would have seen Hart telling Bing that he disapproved of these activities and that he wished Bing to stop doing them. However, not being present to hear the actual verbal exchange that took place in this interaction, let us hear what Bing and Hart each said to a personnel representative.

What Bing Said

In talking about his practice of charging double or triple setup time for panels which he inspected all at one time, Bing said:

This is a perfectly legal thing to do. We've always been doing it. Mr. Hart, the supervisor, has other ideas about it, though; he claims

*This case (names and places disguised) is taken from material prepared by the Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration for class discussion. It is copyrighted by the President and Fellows of Harvard College, 1949.

it's cheating the company. He came over to the bench a day or two ago and let me know just how he felt about the matter. Boy, did we go at it! It wasn't so much the fact that he called me down on it, but more the way in which he did it. He's a sarcastic b.....d. I've never seen anyone like him. He's not content just to say in a manlike way what's on his mind, but he prefers to do it in a way that makes you want to crawl inside a crack on the floor. What a guy! I don't mind being called down by a supervisor, but I like to be treated like a man, and not humiliated like a school teacher does a naughty kid. He's been pullin' this stuff ever since he's been a supervisor. I knew him when he was just one of us, but since he's been promoted he's lost his friendly way and seems to be havin' some difficulty in knowin' how to manage us employees. . . . He's a changed man over what he used to be like when he was a worker on the bench with us several years ago.

When he pulled this kind of stuff on me the other day, I got so damn mad I called in the union representative. I knew that the thing I was doing was permitted by the contract, but I was just intent on making some trouble for Mr. Hart, just because he persists in this sarcastic way of handling me. I'm about fed up with the whole damn situation. I'm tryin' every means I can to get myself transferred out of his group.. If I don't succeed and I'm forced to stay on here, I'm going to screw him in every way I can. He's not gonna pull this kind of kid stuff any longer on me. When the union representative questioned him on the case, he finally had to back down, 'cause according to the contract an employee can use any time-saving method or device in order to speed up the process as long as the quality standards of the job are met.

You see, he knows that I do professional singing on the outside. He hears me singin' here on the job, and he hears the people talkin' about my career in music. I guess he figures I can be so cocky because I have another means of earning some money. Actually, the employees here enjoy havin' me sing while we work, but he thinks I'm disturbing them and causing them to "goof off" from their work. . . . Occasionally, I leave the job a few minutes early and go down to the washroom to wash up before lunch. Sometimes several others in the group will accompany me, and so Mr. Hart automatically thinks I'm the leader and usually bawls me out for the whole thing.

So, you can see, I'm a marked man around here. He keeps watchin' me like a hawk. Naturally, this makes me very uncomfortable. That's why I'm sure a transfer would be the best thing. I've asked him for it, but he didn't give me any satisfaction at the time. While I remain here I'm gonna keep my nose clean, but whenever I get the chance, I'm gonna slip it to him, but good.

What Hart Said

So much for Bing. Let's hear what Hart tells the personnel representative.

Say, I think you should be in on this. My dear little friend "Bing" is heading himself into a showdown with me. Recently it was brought to my attention that Bing has been taking double and triple setup time for panels which he is actually inspecting at one time. In effect, that's cheatin', and I've called him down on it several times before. A few days ago it was brought to my attention again, and so this time I really let him have it in no uncertain terms. He's been

getting away with this for too long and I'm gonna put an end to it once and for all. I know he didn't like my calling him on it because a few hours later he had the union representative breathin' down my back. . . . Well, anyway, I let them both know I'll not tolerate the practice any longer, and I let Bing know that if he continues to do this kind of thing, I'm gonna take official action with my boss to have the guy fired or penalized somehow. This kind of thing has to be curbed. Actually, I'm inclined to think the guy's mentally deficient, because talking to him has actually no meaning to him whatsoever. I've tried just about every approach to jar some sense into that guy's head, and I've just about give it up as a bad deal. . . .

I don't know what it is about the guy, but I think he's harboring some deep feelings against me. For what, I don't know, 'cause I've tried to handle that bird with kid gloves. But his whole attitude around here on the job is one of indifference, and he certainly isn't a good influence on the rest of my group. Frankly, I think he purposely tries to agitate them against me at times, too. It seems to me he may be suffering from illusions of grandeur, 'cause all he does all day long is sit over there and croon his fool head off. Thinks he's a Frank Sinatra! No kidding! I understand he takes singin' lessons and he's working with some of the local bands in the city. All of which is O.K. by me; but when his outside interests start interfering with his efficiency on the job, then I've gotta start paying closer attention to the situation. For this reason I've been keepin' my eye on that bird and if he steps out of line any more, he and I are gonna part ways. . . .

You know there's an old saying, "You can't make a purse out of a sow's ear." The guy is simply unscrupulous. He feels no obligation to do a real day's work. Yet I know the guy can do a good job, because for a long time he did. But in recent months he's slipped, for some reason, and his whole attitude on the job has changed. Why, it's even getting to the point now where I think he's inducing other employees to "goof off" a few minutes before the lunch whistle and go down to the washrooms and clean up on company time. I've called him on it several times but words just don't seem to make any lasting impression on him. Well, if he keeps it up much longer, he's gonna find himself on the way out. He's asked me for a transfer, so I know he wants to go. But I didn't give him an answer when he asked me, 'cause I was steamin' mad at the time, and I may have told him to go somewhere else.

DIFFERENT WAYS OF REPRESENTING MISUNDERSTANDING

So much for the case. Let me start with the simplest but the toughest question first: 'What is going on here?' I think most of us would agree that what seems to be going on is some misunderstanding between Hart and Bing. But no sooner do we try to represent to ourselves the nature of this misunderstanding than a flood of different theories appear. Let me discuss briefly five very common ways of representing this misunderstanding: (1) as a difference of opinion easily resolvable by a reference to the facts; (2) as a 'clash of personalities'; (3) as a conflict of social roles; (4) as a 'struggle for power'; and (5) as a breakdown in communication.

1. A difference of opinion easily settled by the facts

The first theory - although most people who hold this position would not call it that - is generally maintained by the advocates of 'common sense'. To them the situation resolves itself quickly into either Hart is right or Bing is right. As both parties cannot be right, it follows that if Hart is right, then Bing is wrong,

or if Bing is right, then Hart is wrong. Either Bing should or should not be singing on the job, carrying two or three panels at a time and charging double or triple setup time, etc. Let's get these facts settled first. Once ascertained, the problem is easily settled. Once we know who is doing what he should not be doing, then all we have to do is to get this person to do what he should be doing. 'It's as simple as that,' say the advocates of this position.

But is it? Let's look again at our case. Let us note that there are no differences of opinion between Hart and Bing about some matters. For example, both would agree that Bing is taking double or triple setup time when he carries his panels two or three at a time to his bench for inspection. Both would agree that Bing sings on the job and occasionally leaves his workplace a bit early for lunch.

What they differ about is in the way each perceives these activities. To Hart these activities of Bing are perceived as 'cheating,' 'suffering from illusions of grandeur,' 'thinking he is Frank Sinatra,' 'interfering with Bing's efficiency as well as the efficiency of other workers,' 'disturbing the other workers,' 'inducing them to goof off,' and 'influencing them against him (Hart).' To Bing, on the other hand, these activities are 'perfectly legal,' 'something we've always been doing,' 'something that is not disturbing the other workers,' etc.

Among these many different conflicting claims and different perceptions, what are the facts? Many of these evaluations are referring to personal and social standards of conduct for which the company has no explicit rules. Even in the case of taking double and triple setup time, there are probably no clear rules, because when the industrial engineer set the standards for the job, he did not envisage the possibility of a worker doing what Bing is now doing and which, according to Bing, is a time-saving device.

But let us not quibble too much about this position. Grant that Hart is not exploring the situation, that he is not getting these important facts or rules which would settle who is right and who is wrong. But let us also note that Hart knows who is right and who is wrong. And because he knows this, there is no reason for him to question the assumptions he is making about Bing's behavior. He knows. Now this is very likely to happen in the case of advocates of this common-sense theory. Let us note, therefore, that Hart himself is a good advocate of this common-sense theory. Let us also observe that Hart is not being very successful in getting Bing to do what he should be doing and let us postpone for future consideration as to whether or not there is any connection between these two observations.

2. A clash of personalities

For another school of thought, what is going on between Hart and Bing can be viewed essentially as a 'clash of personalities' - an interaction between two particular personality structures. According to this view, what is going on cannot be known in detail until many more data about these different personality structures are secured. These data the case does not provide. Hence we can only speculate that what is going on may be something of this order. Neither Hart nor Bing feels too sure of himself and each seems to be suffering from feelings of inadequacy or inferiority. Being unable to recognize, admit, or accept these feelings, however, each one perceives the behavior of the other as a personal attack upon himself. When a person feels he is being attacked, he feels strongly the need to defend himself. This, then, is essentially what is taking place between Hart and Bing. Due to his feelings of inferiority each one is defending himself against what he perceives to be an attack upon himself as a person. These feelings are conceived as being rooted somehow in his 'personality'.¹

¹For an example of this way of thinking and talking, see any recent textbook in psychology.

That this theory is pointing to some very important phenomena can hardly be questioned. Please be assured that I am not concerned with arguing about the validity of this theory. I am only concerned with what it is telling us and what follows from it. As I understand it, this theory says that neither Hart nor Bing is aware of his own feelings of inadequacy and defense mechanisms. These are the important 'facts' that each is ignoring. From this it follows that there is little hope of correcting the misunderstanding without helping Bing and/or Hart to become aware of these feelings and their need to defend against them. Short of this, the solution lies in transferring Bing to a supervisor whose personality will be more compatible with Bing's and to give Hart a worker whose personality will be more compatible with Hart's.

3. A conflict of social roles

Let us look at another explanation. Instead of viewing the misunderstanding as an interaction between two monadic personality units, it can also be viewed as an interaction between two social roles. With the promotion of Hart to the position of a supervisor of a group in which he had been formerly a worker, a system of reciprocal expectancies has been disturbed. Bing is expecting Hart to behave toward him (Bing) in the same way that Hart had behaved toward him when Hart was a worker. Hart, as the newly-appointed supervisor, is expecting that Bing should do what he (Hart) tells him to do. By 'singing', for example, Bing is not behaving in accordance with the customary role of the 'worker'. By telling Bing to stop 'crooning his fool head off,' Hart is not behaving in accordance with the role of a 'friend'. According to this theory, when two actors in a relationship reach differing definitions of the situation, misunderstanding is likely to arise. This is what is happening between Hart and Bing. The role-expectation pattern has been disturbed. Bing views his singing as variant but permissive; Hart views it as deviant. From these differing definitions of what each other's role should be, misunderstanding results.²

According to this view it will take time for the new relationship to work out. In time Bing will learn what to expect from Hart, now that he is his supervisor. Also in time Hart will define better his role vis-a-vis Bing.

4. A struggle for power

Another way of representing what is going on between Hart and Bing would be in terms of such abstractions as 'authority' and 'power'. For example, when Bing refuses to stop singing on the job when Hart tells him to, Bing is being disobedient to the commands or orders of a holder of power. When this occurs, Hart, who according to this theory is a 'power holder', has the right to exercise or apply sanctions (dismissal, transfer, etc.). Because the threat to exercise these sanctions does not seem to be too effective in getting Bing to stop, Hart is planning to go to his boss, who is a bigger power holder and who therefore has the right to exercise bigger and better sanctions. But why may not Hart and/or his boss actually exercise the sanctions they have the right to apply and which according to this theory is what gives them their 'power'? Because, says this theory, 'power' which when exercised is not successful, ceases to be 'power'. To be 'power' it has to be always successful. The reason why Hart and his boss may be reluctant therefore to apply the sanctions they have the right to apply is because Bing is a member of the union who also has power and the right to apply sanctions to maintain it. When Bing goes to his union representative, he is bringing this power structure into play.³

²For an example of this way of thinking and talking, see any recent textbook in sociology.

³For an example of this way of thinking and talking, see Robert Bierstedt, 'An Analysis of Social Power' in The American Sociological Review, December 1950.

According to this theory, what is going on here is not merely an interaction between two individual or social personalities; what is also taking place is a struggle between two kinds of institutionalized power. In terms of this struggle the activities of the principal actors will take on another hue. They become an issue between management and the union which may even precipitate a strike. Management will charge that it cannot have workers in their plant who are disobedient to the orders of their foremen. Union will charge that Bing is merely introducing a labor-saving device which the foreman has not enough sense to recognize. To avoid things getting to this stage, this theory would recommend that if Hart and Bing cannot settle their differences between them, they should refer them to the grievance machinery set up for this purpose by union and management. According to this theory, Hart got into trouble not because he had 'authority', but because he lost it by his behavior.

5. A breakdown in communication

Another way of stating what is going on would be to say that Hart and Bing think they are talking about the same things when in fact they are not. Hart assumes he understands what Bing is doing and saying; Bing assumes he understands what Hart is doing and saying; when in fact neither assumption holds. From this 'uncritical assumption of understanding', misunderstanding arises.

When Hart tells Bing to stop 'crooning his fool head off,' for example, Bing assumes that Hart is talking about Bing's singing when Hart may be in fact talking about his difficulties in maintaining his position as formal leader of the group. When Hart hears Bing singing, Hart assumes that Bing is doing this deliberately to flaunt his (Hart's) authority when Bing's singing may be for Bing a way of relating himself to people and of maintaining his conceptions of himself.⁴

According to this theory, Hart and Bing are not on the same beam or wave length and as a result communication by-passing occurs. Each is behaving in accordance with what he perceives the facts to be, but neither one of the actors is aware of the assumptions that underlie his perceptions. Their misunderstandings are due to these implicit assumptions that underlie their differences in perceiving. This theory strikes a new note that I should like to explore further.

HOW HART CONTRIBUTES TO THE MISUNDERSTANDING

So far our theories have tended to view these interpersonal proceedings as determined by the personalities of the actors and by the social and institutionalized settings in which these proceedings occurred. They have explained well why there is misunderstanding and conflict; they have not shown so clearly how any new kind of behavior might emerge. So far they have tended to view these interpersonal proceedings as on-going rather than as learning processes. In them we have found no responsible actor, no learner and no practitioner of a skill. Could it be that what is going on between Hart and Bing results also in part from the fact that nobody is taking any responsibility for what is going on? May we not assume that people learn through their relationships with others as well as are determined by them. Let us therefore look at these interpersonal proceedings from the point of view of a person who is responsibly involved in them and who may be capable of learning something from them.

I shall start with Hart and raise the questions, 'What is Hart doing to con-

⁴For an example of this way of thinking and talking, see any book in general semantics or in particular, Wendell Johnson, 'The Fateful Process of Mr. A. Talking to [Reproduced in this issue of GSB, Nos. 14 & 15, pp. 20-27.]

tribute to the misunderstanding,' and, 'What, if anything, might he learn to do differently to minimize this effect?' Please note that from now on I shall be chiefly concerned with Hart, not because I think Hart is any more or less guilty than Bing of creating misunderstanding, but because I wish now to develop a useful way of thinking for persons in a position of responsibility like Hart. This way of thinking, I hope, will not be in conflict with our other theories. It will merely 'spell out' what a supervisor must learn if he is to take into account the significant processes which these other theories have said have been going on. Instead of viewing Hart, then, in his dealings with Bing as expressing his personality, playing a social role, or exercising power, let us view him now as a practitioner of a skill of communication. Let us see what skills, if any, he is using. And if we find, as I fear we may, not too skillful behavior, let us ask ourselves if he can learn to become a more skillful practitioner, and how this can be done.

When we ask ourselves what Hart is doing to facilitate misunderstanding, we meet again a number of different theories. Although I am not sure that these theories are pointing to different things, nevertheless as each uses a slightly different terminology, I shall state them separately and try to be brief.

1. Hart is making value judgments

According to one view, the biggest block to personal communication arises from the fact that Hart is making value judgments of Bing from his (Hart's) own point of view. Hart's tendency to evaluate is what gets him into trouble. Not only is he evaluating Bing, he is trying to get Bing to accept his own evaluation as the only and proper one. It is this orientation which gets Bing angry and makes him feel misunderstood.⁵

2. Hart is not listening

According to another and not too different view, Hart gets into trouble because he is not listening to Bing's feelings. Because he is not paying attention to Bing's feelings, he is not responding to them as such. Instead, we find him responding to the effect of Bing's feelings upon his own. Not only is he ignoring Bing's feelings, but also he is ignoring the effect of what he is saying upon them. This kind of behavior also leads to Bing's feelings of being misunderstood.⁶

3. Hart is assuming things that may not be so

Still another point of view says that Hart is getting into trouble because he is making assumptions about Bing's behavior that may not be so. Hart is confusing what he sees with what he assumes and feels. When Hart sees Bing leaving early for lunch, for example, he assumes that Bing is doing this deliberately, intentionally, and personally to discredit him and to test his authority. Because of this assumption he feels angry and his feelings of anger reinforce his assumption. Now if Bing's going to lunch a few minutes early is such an attempt to discredit him, then Hart's anger and his attempt to retaliate make sense. But if he starts with this assumption and makes no attempt to check it, then his anger makes less sense. Hart may be assuming something that isn't so.

According to this point of view Hart is making many assumptions that may not be

⁵For an example of this way of thinking and talking, see Carl Rogers, 'Barriers and Gateways to Communication,' Harvard Business Review, Vol. XXX, No. 4, July-August, 1952.

⁶For an example of this way of thinking and talking, see F. J. Roethlisberger, 'Barriers and Gateways to Communication,' Harvard Business Review, Vol. XXX, No. 4, July-August, 1952.

so. For example, when he tries to get Bing to stop singing at work or to stop inspecting panels two or three at a time, he does this by telling Bing to stop 'crooning his fool head off' and to stop 'cheating' the company. When he does this, is he not assuming that Bing should feel about these activities in the same way that he (Hart) does, and if Bing does not feel this way, then obviously Bing must be a 'fool', 'defective', or a 'sow's ear'. To Hart Bing is a sow's ear. And how does one feel toward a sow's ear? Toward such an entity one must feel (by definition) helpless and hopeless. But is it not also likely that when Hart feels helpless and hopeless in getting Bing to behave in the way Hart thinks he should, Hart will perceive Bing as a sow's ear?

In short, all of Hart's evaluations are suspect because he confuses what he sees with what he assumes and feels. As a result, there is no way for Hart to take another look at the situation. How can Hart check his evaluations when he is not aware that he is making them? By treating inferences as facts, there is no way for him to explore the assumptions, feelings, and perceptions that underlie his evaluations. For Hart, Bing is the way he perceives him to be. There is no way for him to say that because of the assumptions I make and because of the way I feel I perceive Bing in this way.⁷

4. Hart is making his false assumptions come true

Still another theory emphasizes still another point. This theory says that the very kind of misevaluations of which our last theory says Hart is guilty must provoke ipso facto the very kind of behavior on the part of Bing of which Hart disapproves. Hart is getting into trouble because by his behavior he is making his assumptive world come true and as a result he is not learning anything from his dealings with Bing.

Let us examine this theory first by looking at the effect of Hart's behavior upon Bing. Very clearly Bing does not like it. Bing tells us that when Hart behaves in the way he does, he feels misunderstood, humiliated, and treated like a child. These feelings give grounds to his perception of Hart as 'a sarcastic bastard,' 'a school teacher pulling kid stuff on him,' and 'out to get him.' These perceptions in turn will tend to make Bing behave in the way that will coincide more and more with Hart's original untested assumptions about Bing's behavior. Feeling like a 'marked man', Bing will behave more and more like a 'sow's ear'. Although he will try to 'keep his nose clean,' whenever he gets the chance, he 'will slip it to him (Hart), but good.'

That this kind of misevaluation on the part of Hart will tend to produce this kind of behavior on the part of Bing is, according to this view, a fact of common experience. To explain this uniformity one does not have to assume any peculiar personality structure on the part of Bing - an undue sensitivity to criticism, a defensiveness or feelings of inferiority. All one has to assume is a unique personality with a need to maintain this uniqueness. Any attempts, then, on the part of Hart which will be perceived by Bing as an attempt to deny his individual differences and uniqueness will be resisted. But this is the very kind of response which Hart's behavior must produce, because the very nature of Hart's misevaluation consists of the fact that he is evaluating Bing from Hart's point of view and saying that this is what Bing is. But that is exactly what Bing is not. Bing is what he is from his own frame of reference and from the point of view of his own feelings, background, and situation. Bing is what he assumes, feels, and perceives himself to be. And this is what Hart's behavior is denying.⁸

⁷For an example of this way of thinking and talking see Irving Lee: How to Talk with People, New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1952.

⁸For an example of this way of thinking and talking, see Hadley Cantril: The Why of Man's Experience. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1950.

In spite of these different ways of talking, all these observations would seem to suggest that there are uniformities in those interpersonal proceedings of which account also has to be taken regardless of the actors' particular personalities or social roles. For the misunderstandings that arise, Hart and Bing are not to blame; they reside in the process of interpersonal communication itself.

CAN HART LEARN TO BEHAVE DIFFERENTLY?

Let us raise our second question, 'What might Hart learn to do differently to minimize the misunderstandings between him and Bing?' I want to consider here briefly the question of what difference to Bing a slight difference in the behavior of Hart might make. So far it would seem as if we had made Hart the 'villain in the piece.' But let us remember that although Hart has been intellectually and emotionally involved in what has been going on, he has not been aware of this involvement. All of our theories have implied this. Hart's ego has been involved, his actual group memberships have been involved, his reference groups have been involved, his feelings, assumptions, and perceptions have been involved, but Hart is not aware of this. If any new behavior on the part of Hart is to emerge - all our theories would agree to this - Hart must in some sense become aware of and recognize this involvement. Without such an awareness there can be no re-evaluation or no change in perception. Without a change in perception no learning can take place.

How can this be done? Here again there are essentially two different schools of thought.

One theory seems to imply that misunderstanding will be minimized only when Hart logically understands the nature of his involvement with Bing. Hart will learn to evaluate Bing more properly only when he understands better the personality structures of himself and Bing and the social system of which they are a part. Only by the logical understanding and critical probings of the feelings of inadequacy and defense mechanisms of Hart and/or Bing, can a proper evaluation be made and any real change occur.⁹

According to the second theory, logical understanding is not of the first importance. Misunderstanding will be minimized when Hart learns to recognize and accept his involvement. Better understanding will be achieved when Hart learns to recognize and accept his own and Bing's individual differences, when he learns to recognize and accept Bing's feelings as being different from his own and when as a result he can allow Bing to express his feelings and differences and listen to them.¹⁰

Let me explore this second theory further as it suggests that Hart might possibly learn to do a better job without having to become a professional social scientist or be 'psychoanalyzed'. Moreover, it coincides with some facts of common experience. Some administrators have achieved the insights of the second theory through the school of 'hard knocks' and without the help of books or being 'analyzed'. The question is, 'Are there some simple skills which Hart can be taught, learn, and practice which would help him to recognize and accept his involvement and to deal with it more skillfully?'

Now it may be that Hart, because of certain personal deficiencies, is not able to recognize or accept his own feelings - let alone Bing's. That this holds for some supervisors goes without question. But does it apply to all? Is it possible that some supervisors may not be able to do these things because they have never learned how to do them?

⁹For an example of this way of thinking and talking, see most textbooks in psychoanalysis.

¹⁰For an example of this way of thinking and talking see Carl Rogers: Client-Centered Therapy. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1951.

For example, Hart does not get into trouble because he feels hopeless and helpless in the face of a worker who sings on the job, leaves early for lunch, etc., and who refuses to stop doing these things when he tells him to. Any one of us who has had to deal with a worker behaving like Bing will recognize and remember these feelings of inadequacy only too well. We do not need to have very peculiar or special personality structures to have such feelings. Hart's trouble does not lie in the fact that he has such feelings. It resides in the fact that he assumes and has been told too often, I fear, that he should not have them. It resides in the fact that he has not developed or been given a method or skill for dealing with them and therefore, as a result, these feelings are denied and appear in the form of an attribute of Bing - 'a sow's ear'.

Is it possible, then, that Hart gets into trouble partly because no one has assured him that it is normal and natural - in fact, inevitable - that he should have some of these feelings of inadequacy, that he cannot or should not try to escape from them. No one has helped him to develop a method of dealing with his own feelings and the feelings of Bing. No one has listened to him or helped him to learn to listen to others. No one has helped him to recognize the effect of his behavior on others. No one has helped him to become aware of his assumptions and feelings and how they affect the evaluations he makes.

Instead, too many courses have told him what an 'ideal supervisor' should be and how such an 'ideal supervisor' should behave. Explicitly and implicitly in most of the instruction he receives is the assumption that an 'ideal supervisor' should not become emotionally involved in his dealings with people. He has been told to remain aloof, to be 'objective', and to deny or get rid of his feelings. But this communication goes against the facts of his immediate experience; it goes against everything which our theories have said Hart's growth and development depend upon.

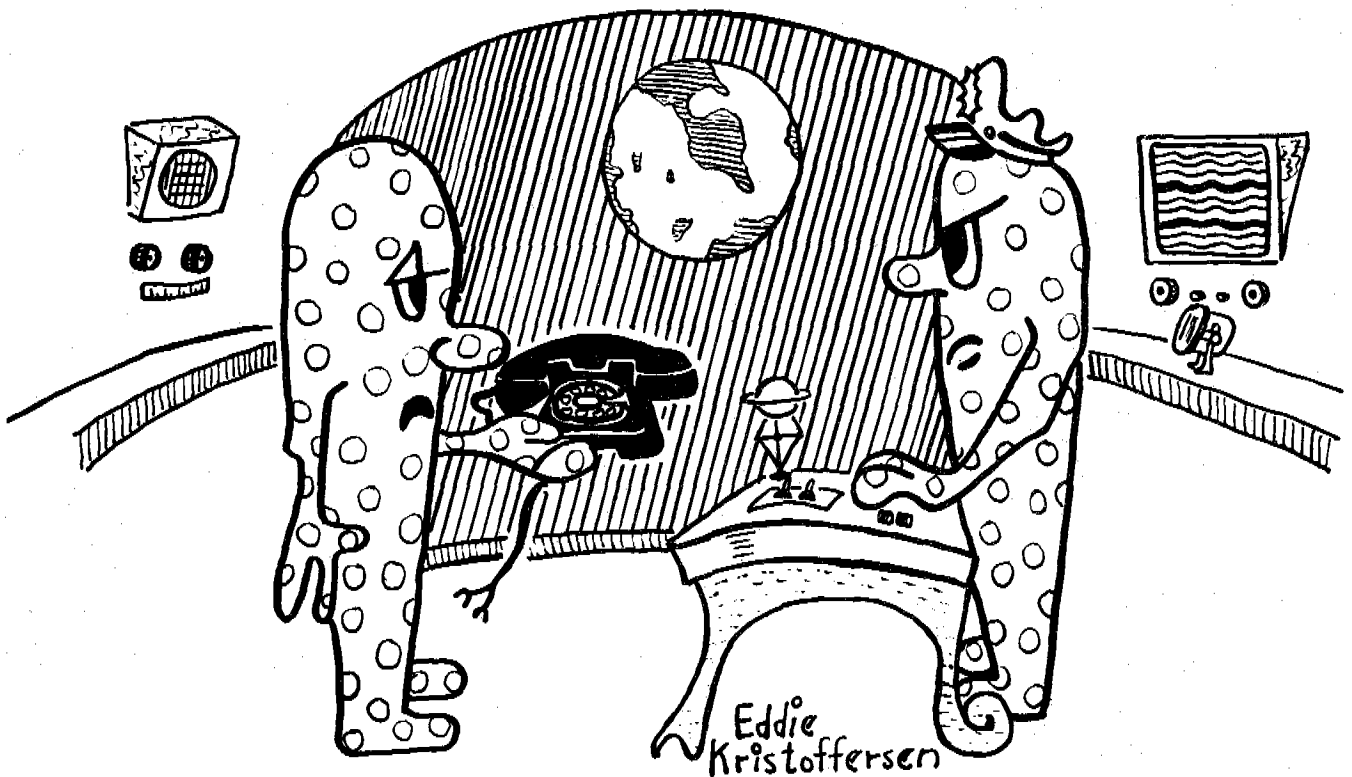
Is it any wonder, therefore, that he remains immature - socially, intellectually, and emotionally? He gets no understanding of how these frustrations and misunderstandings must inevitably arise from his dealings with others; he gets no help of how to deal with them when they do arise. Hart has had probably many courses which told him how to recognize and deal with workers who are 'sow's ears'. He has had probably no course which helped him to see how his assumptions and feelings tended to produce 'sow's ears' by the bushel. He has not been helped to see how this surplus of 'sow's ears' in modern industry might be diminished through the conscious practice of a skill. Thus he has not even been allowed to become intellectually involved and intrigued in the most important problem of his profession. He has been told to 'behave responsibly' and to be 'mature' without becoming emotionally committed. This, according to our analysis, would be the 'trick of the week'.

Am I indulging in wishful thinking when I believe that there are some simple skills of communication which can be taught, learned, and practiced which might help to diminish misunderstanding? To me it is this possibility which the recent findings of general semantics and human relations are suggesting. They suggest that although man is determined by the complex relationships of which he is a part, nevertheless he is also in some small part a determiner of these relationships. Once he learns what he cannot do, he is ready to learn what little he can do and what a tremendous difference to himself and to others the little that he can do - listening with understanding, for example - can make. Once he can accept his limitations and the limitations of others, he can begin to learn to behave more skillfully with regard to the milieu in which he finds himself. He can begin to learn that misunderstanding can be diminished - not banished - by the slow, patient, laborious practice of a skill.

To prevent ourselves from getting too excited with this possibility, let me conclude by introducing two words of caution. First, although these skills of communication of which I am speaking deal in part with words, they are not in themselves

words, nor is the territory to which they apply 'words'. It follows, then, that no verbal statement about these skills, however accurate, can act as a substitute for them. They are never truly articulate and never can be. Although transmissible to other persons, they are only slowly so. It also follows that 'proper evaluation', if it is to remain close to the territory, must begin in the first instance as a practice of a skill.

Secondly, let us remember that these interpersonal proceedings between A and B are extremely complex, and so far as I know, there exists no single body of concepts which as yet describes systematically and interconnectedly all the important processes our separate theories have said are taking place. Let us therefore accept gracefully and not contentiously that these interpersonal proceedings, unlike the atom, have not been as yet 'cracked' by social science.



**"HERE'S THE EARTHMAN WE BROUGHT BACK SIR,
BUT HE WON'T TALK SINCE WE CAPTURED HIM."**

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