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DRAFT OF A FULLER PAPER TO BE ELABORATED IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

What is Quantum Psychology? Note I: Rooted in Genuine Stupidity

by
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I thank Sky Chaney for inviting me to write three short essays introducing my Quantum Psychology Project at the Mental Research Institute for the new MRI electronic journal. Note 1 overviews how I created my “Genuine Stupidity Logic” model as a new scientific model for psychology in the mid-1970s. Note 2 will discuss (1) how I was subsequently called upon to serve as scientific representative and editor for imprisoned Soviet scientist Yuri Orlov’s similar “wave logic” model, and (2) how I was lead to coin the term “quantum psychology” in 1982 to describe this class of science in order to distinguish my own quantum effort from Orlov’s nonquantum approach. Note 3 will elaborate upon what I mean by quantum psychology being a “scientific model.” I will explain how quantum psychology is science but not quantum physics.

CAVEAT: In 1994 David Finkelstein mentioned that, unbeknown to me, both he and Elihu Lubkin had previously used the expression “quantum psychology” in physics during the 1970s in a somewhat more casual manner. My more specific usage has been to identify and distinguish the formal, interpretive, critical, and empirical aspects of my psychological model, and appears to be in harmony with their usage in physics. In contrast, my scientific approach is at fundamental odds with Stephen Wolinsky’s more recent, metaphoric adaptation of “quantum psychology” for his own therapeutic enterprise. For instance, Wolinsky associates his work with Pribram’s “holographic” understanding of quantum physics which Oshins has shown to be irrelevant to quantum physics or quantum psychology (Oshins, 1991). In subsequent notes, I hope to explore further some of these aspects of my Quantum Psychology Project(R).

BACKGROUND: In the mid-1970s, I began to examine a controversy in the psychological literature concerning the nature of schizophrenia as a logical phenomenon (Oshins and McGoveran, 1980). Initially, I was interested in the formal arguments between (1a) the intrapsychic approach of E. von Domarus, Silvano Arieti, and others, and (1b) the interactional/communications approach of Bateson, Jackson, Haley and Weakland concerning, respectively, (2a) von Domarus’ principle of “identification by predicates” and (2b) “double-bind theory.”

The intrapsychic perspective viewed schizophrenia as a logical deficit in which, instead of reasoning, e.g.:

“Socrates is a man.

All men are mortal.

Thus, Socrates is mortal.”,

a schizophrenic supposedly reasons, e.g.:

“I am a virgin.

The Virgin Mary was a virgin.

Thus, I am the Virgin Mary.”.

The double-bind point of view saw schizophrenia as a consequence of the individual trying to accommodate an inviable communications context in which he: (1) believes it is necessary to discriminate and “chose”

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between alternatives on more than one logical level, each of which disconfirms the other; (2) is not able to step out of the “choice” context which would enable him to comment on the inviability of these “options;” and (3) comes to expect such infeasible experience as ordinary.

I did not see these models as being in contradiction but as addressing opposite sides of the boundary between the intrapsychic and the interpersonal/systemic systems. I thought that much of the disagreement was due to an inadequate appreciation of the alternative theories and to an insufficient symbolic representation for defining and comparing the differing points of view. As I understood that these issues were considered important in psychiatry, I began to try to construct an intellectual tool to clarify the matter, as I understood it.

At that time, I was also looking at “fuzzy logic” and “the laws of form,” which are two variant logics developed by computer scientists attempting to model thought by generalized classical logics. I saw that there was a way to combine, with minor modifications, certain concepts from these artificial intelligence approaches to psychology and language into a “nondistributive” logic (technically, a “lattice”) as is found in quantum theory. The “laws of form” approach likened Epimenedes’ paradox (“This statement is false.”), and self-referential paradox in general, to the arithmetic equation ($x = -1/x$). I took this arithmetic equation and converted it into a MATRIX eigenvalue equation [$Xf = -I(X^{-1})f$], where X is a 2x2 matrix, f is a two spinor, -I is the additive inverse of the multiplicative identity, and X^{-1} represents the multiplicative matrix inverse to X.

Matrices have the property that their multiplication is order-dependent. Indeed, in describing Heisenberg’s creation of quantum mechanics, Max Born stated: “ ... And one morning ... I suddenly saw light: Heisenberg’s symbolic multiplication was nothing but the matrix calculus, well known to me since my student days. ... I recognized at once its formal significance. It meant that the two matrix products pq and qp are not identical ... that matrix multiplication is not commutative ...” (Oshins and McGoveran, op.cit., ft.nt. 6). In quantum physics, there is a measure of the difference in such ordering, called the COMMUTATOR, which is precisely a measure of the INTERACTION between the measuring and the measured system ... the knower and the known. Since I was proposing a competing model to the “artificial intelligence” efforts, I decided, tongue-in-cheek, to call my approach “genuine stupidity logic.” (The change to “quantum psychology” will be elaborated upon in Note 2.)

Within the logic framework, this order dependent interaction provides the logical equivalent of a type of REPRESENTATIONAL AMBIGUITY between constructs viewed as reference frames. Such an interpretation provides an operational approach to complementarity, whereby one construct restricts the simultaneous availability of another construct while being necessary for unambiguous specification in a different context. A type of metalogic results involving the metalinguistic choices between competing, contrary points of view or frameworks.

The pertinent issue, here, is not whether [‘A’ is ‘true’] or whether [‘A’ is ‘false’/‘not-A’ is ‘true’], but whether the (A, not-A)-system is the appropriate context. For a complementary metalogic to apply to a description, there would exist an equally good (B, not-B)-system that could adequately describe the same phenomena so that ‘B or not-B’ is also ‘true.’ In the book Change (Watzlawick, Weakland and Fisch, 1974), the authors correctly express the failure of the distributive law for a complementary metalogic in their own language when describing reframing and second order change: [‘A or not-A’ is ‘true’] but this does not mean that [‘A’ is ‘true’] nor that [‘not-A’ is ‘true’] since the (A, not-A) system, itself, might be an inappropriate context for the particular, influencing situation . The therapist has the ability then to reframe the constructs used to characterize the phenomena in a manner that subverts the problem.

In still other language, to assert ‘Statement-A’ — a proposition about a property of a “physical observable” — and to assert “ ‘Statement-A’ is ‘true’ ” are different. [“ ‘Statement-A’ is ‘true’ ” is “false”] is NOT the same as [“ ‘Statement-A’ is ‘false’ ”], i.e.,[“ ‘Statement-not-A’ is ‘true’ ”]. Both ‘Statement-A’ and ‘Statement-not-A’ might be inadequate to the context. Within such a metacontext, neither statement would

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be ‘true’ nor would be ‘false’ if there existed a competing, complementary ‘Statement-B’ which were the appropriate choice. In other words, the (A, not-A)-constructs compete with the (B, not-B)-constructs for simultaneous availability as contexts although the (A, not-A)-constructs might be appropriate given an (A, not-A)-context.(Examples can be found in Oshins (1995), and will be discussed further in future notes.)

When such “experimental contexts” are not decidable, physicists speak of this metalogical ambiguity as “nonselecting measurement.” It occurs through a highly nonclassical type of “superposition” of states of information. This type of “quantum parallel processing,” which I have called “synaptic spanning,” results in complementarity for the competing, metalogical contexts. I saw this framework of complementarity and metalogical ambiguity as an intellectual tool to envision both the intrapsychic equivocation process discussed by von Domarus and the metalogical communications of “double-binds” and “second order change.”

Furthermore, I replaced the distributive law of classical logic, ie. $[A \text{ and } (B \text{ or } C) = (A \text{ and } B) \text{ or } (A \text{ and } C)]$, by my PRINCIPLE OF METALOGICAL AMBIGUITY for competing/complementary contexts:

“If one does not distinguish between two unit predicates A & B, there will always exist a third possible unit predicate C such that $(A \text{ or } B) = (B \text{ or } C) = (C \text{ or } A)$,”

A, B, & C are equivalent “perspectives.” There is no operational way to distinguish between A, B, & C. (This is discussed further, for example, in my chapter in Propagations (Oshins, 1995).)

In the beginning of Change (Op. Cit.), the authors had stated that the order of two operations did NOT matter for the mathematics of “group theory,” which they were recommending. From my perspective, it was this very property that allowed for the kind of interactions which I had proposed. I saw that the logical structure used by physicists in talking about physical propositions could be adapted to the logical structure used by psychologists to talk about psychology and linguistic propositions. Since much of this psychological work had originated at the Mental Research Institute, in 1976, I took a trip from New York to California to discuss my ideas there. I never moved back, thus, beginning what became my Quantum Psychology Project.

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* Substantial errata to Oshins (1995) is at <http://quantumpsychology.com/MRI-errata.html> and to Oshins and McGoveran (1980) is at http://quantumpsychology.com/Logic_About_Thoughts.html