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The Theory of Affinity, Reality and Communication

From Lectures By
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These three words: Affinity, Reality and Communication, do not seem on the surface to have much to do with each other. A little thought will discover that your Affinity with another person will have something to do with your ability to Communicate with him, but how these two are related to Reality is not so easily seen. As a matter of fact, these three words have an extremely close and interesting relationship.

AFFINITY

The term "affinity" as it is used in Dianetics is fairly close in meaning to the word *like*. However, affinity is a two-way proposition. Not only do *you like* something, but you feel that it likes you. Affinity is also very much like the word *love* when *love is* used in its universal sense. It includes both *love* and *like* and is broader than both. It includes all feelings of good will and kinship.

Man would not be man without affinity. Every animal has affinity to some degree but man is capable of feeling an especially large amount. Long before he organized into cities, he had organized into tribes and clans. Before the tribes and clans there were undoubtedly packs. Man's instinctive need for affinity with his fellow human beings has long been recognized and his domestication of other animals shows that this affinity extends also to other species. One could have guessed that the race which first developed affinity to its highest degree would become the dominant race on any planet and this has been borne out. Although the kind of affinity enjoyed by the insect world can be shown to be an entirely different type of affinity (since it is not based on the individual remaining an individual and having affinity for another individual), nevertheless, this pseudo-affinity has made the insect world a dangerous rival for planet supremacy. The dangers of broken affinity have long been recognized by students of the human mind.

A child is full of affinity. Not only does he have affinity for his father, mother, brothers and sisters and his playmates, but for his dogs, his cats and stray dogs that happen to come around. But affinity goes even beyond this. You can have a feeling of affinity for objects: "I love the way the grain stands out in that wood." There is a feeling of oneness with the earth, blue skies, rain, mill ponds, cartwheels and bullfrogs which is affinity.

Affinity is never identification, nor does it go quite so far as empathy. You remain very much yourself when you have affinity for something but you also feel the essence of the thing for which you have affinity. You remain yourself and, yet, you draw closer to the object for which you have affinity. It is not a binding quality. There are no strings attached when affinity is given. To the receiver it carries no duties and no responsibilities. It is pure, easy and natural and flows out from you as easily as sunlight flows from the sun.

Affinity begets affinity. A person who is filled with the quality will automatically find people anywhere near him also beginning to be filled with affinity. It is a calming, warming, heartening influence on all who are capable of receiving and giving it.

COMMUNICATION

“For all who are capable of receiving and giving it” indicates quite clearly that the use of affinity (and affinity ceases to exist unless it is used) is dependent on the ability to communicate.

Communication has been equally important in the development of the race. A man’s impact on the world has been directly proportionate to his development of a means of communication. Communication in its broadest sense, of course, includes all the ways in which a person or thing becomes aware of or becomes aware to, another person or thing. Man’s unusual ability to communicate in a number of different ways is largely responsible for the growth of his intelligence and the growth of his civilization.

In the main, however, communication in man divides itself into two large groups. Language forms such an important part of the communication lines between people that it deserves a special consideration and a classification all its own. All other forms of communication are in another class. Perhaps in the future, other forms of communication will be developed which are superior to spoken or written language per se, but until these tools have developed a great deal more objective accuracy than they are at present capable of obtaining, language will remain the chief tool of communication.

Music is a very fine means of communication which can bypass the use of words completely. Music, however, is limited in its communication to broad implications rather than to exact facts. Of course if you speak of emotional states as fact, then music could be considered an exact form of communication; but an entire symphony might be built around the idea of trying to communicate the fact that a typewriter was moved from a chair to a desk. This is admittedly not efficient communication at this level of abstraction. On the other hand, music can successfully describe, in one small turn of one phrase, an emotional state which might fill two volumes with large and mellifluous psychological speech.

Before the development of language, man communicated quite readily and successfully by means of signs, gestures, imitation and pure identity of perceptive imagery. Perhaps in the future, methods of transmitting states of being will become sufficiently advanced so that the objective considerations of matter, energy, space and time (MEST in Dianetics) may be also transmitted in the same way that emotional states are now transmitted by music.

At the moment, however, language remains our most useful tool of communication. It is notable that the great men of history have almost unanimously been particularly adept at communication. A very large percentage of these men have used language as their primary means of communication, but some have used music, and some have used the other less exact methods of transmitting affinity and of having force with other men. Quite recently, the development of mathematics has placed an extremely flexible and useful language in the hands of a few people. The work of the late Count Korzybski has pointed out with great distinctness the advantages which the language of mathematics has given to scientists of the physical universe. Rationality, *in their special field*, is very high among physicists and chemists who do a great deal of their thinking in terms of the rational language of mathematics.

Starting with affinity with each other and working by means of communication with each other, mankind has gradually changed and tamed the world in which he lived. Order is slowly being evolved out of disorder and, once the hurdle of irrationality is crossed, man will reach out for other worlds. With affinity and through communication, man is remaking the world.

REALITY

Most people are unaware of how much man really does make his own world. It is surprising how much reality is dependent on an agreement between individuals that an object or an idea exists.

Take the case of a person who has been hypnotized and has been told that there is a chair in the center of the room. This, in effect, is an agreement entered into between the hypnotist and the person who is hypnotized that there *is* a chair in the center of the room. The person who is hypnotized is temporarily cut off from the rest of mankind and finds that his only communication and his only affinity, for the duration of the hypnosis, is with a hypnotic operator. So that when this person goes into the center of the room, he can feel the chair, sit on the chair, stumble over the chair, or even bum the chair up with a match. For him, the chair in the center of the room really exists. To the hypnotic operator who is still in communication and agreement with the rest of mankind, or at least a portion of it, the spectacle of someone who believes a chair to be in the middle of the room when obviously no chair is there may be very ludicrous. Yet it may be possible that the chairs which to everyone else in the room seem to be sitting around the walls may be there only because everyone else agrees that they are there.

A group of men who were isolated on a South Pacific island during the last war developed a curious (and, at times, hilarious) pastime which involved a little, brown, imaginary dog. The company commander, in particular, was always bumping into this dog, sitting down on this dog, or in some other way giving some private an opportunity to say, "Oh, please sir, don't hurt the mascot!" This game suddenly came to an abrupt halt. *Someone had actually seen the dog and everybody got scared!*

This little, brown dog probably had only a very, very tiny amount of reality. There is a strong conviction in the mind of humanity that you cannot produce little, brown dogs by agreeing that they exist. For this reason, the men in this company were probably right in judging the men who saw the dog as almost psychotic, rather than believing that the dog actually existed. In other words, there was not, in this case, a truly genuine agreement that the dog existed. Nevertheless, it could not be proved completely that the dog did *not* exist. One man became convinced of this for one moment, and the sense of reality of the entire group was jolted because one of its members suddenly agreed internally on a reality which the other members of the group had helped to create but did not, basically, agree upon. For one moment this man had a different reality, and the others in the group felt responsible.

But what are psychotic people except those who have a different reality from the agreed-upon reality? It would be interesting to observe what would happen if a large number of psychotics with similar psychoses were allowed to create a little world of their own. If they could remain completely isolated from the rest of humanity for a considerable length of time, it is not inconceivable that they would begin to agree in some respects on their reality and would actually create a different system of reality from the one which has been developed by the rest of mankind.

For an individual, reality can only consist of his interpretation of the sensory perceptions he receives. The comparative unreliability of this data is clearly shown by the varying reports always received in the description of, say, an automobile accident. People who have studied this phenomenon report that there is an amazing degree of difference in the description given of the same scene by different observers. In other words, the reality of this situation differed in details for each of the observers. As a matter of fact, there is a wide area of agreement, extremely wide, the common agreement of mankind. This is the earth. We are men. The automobiles are automobiles. They are propelled by the explosion of certain chemicals. The air is the air. The sun is in the sky. (Common agreement now has it around 93 million miles away. Whether it was really that far away before people found that it was true, is open to question.) There is usually an agreement that a wreck happened. Beyond this basic area of agreement there are differing interpretations of reality.

But take any one of the points just mentioned and carry your inquiry into this point deep enough and you will find a point at which agreement ceases.

"The air is the air." All mankind agrees.

"Air is composed only of certain chemical agents."

"Not so," says the Australian bushman, "air is one single thing, earth is another single thing."

“No! There is also the spirit of life in the air,” says the member of an oriental religion.

When the point of disagreement is reached, reality is weaker. Press the point of the composition of air and its effect on the human being and the large group disagreements will break into smaller and smaller groups. Reality becomes more and more tenuous. Eventually disagreement will be discovered among *individuals* and at that point, reality is almost nonexistent.

There may be somewhere, some ultimate sort of reality which would exist without communication and affinity among men. Whether this ultimate reality would exist for any one man is highly debatable. It is certain, however, that this ultimate sort of reality, at the present moment at least, is unknowable to man as he is so constituted. Functionally, then, it could be said that reality consists of a common area of agreement which has been communicated by the persons in whom there is affinity. This is a long way from saying that reality exists in your mind and that you have complete control of whatever reality exists. The amount of reality which mankind has built up for itself is truly amazing. The amount of reality which exists for other species must be considerably less. Among them, there is a considerable degree of difference between the amount of reality possessed by individuals.

Consider the nuclear physicists. For several hundred years now, the basic notions of the atom have been gaining in reality to larger and larger numbers of people. The notions which only one or two of the Greeks had in the time of the Golden Age of Greece were held by millions and millions of people by 1945. Hundreds of thousands of people had much more exact ideas of what an atom was and how it behaved than would have been possible for any man prior to 1800. To these hundreds of thousands of people, the atom contained more reality, it was more real to them, than to the other millions who had only a vague idea that atoms were the basic building blocks of the universe. Tens of thousands of people were aware of the possibility of turning the atomic structure into energy. For these tens of thousands, the atom was even more real. Indeed, they were not too surprised when energy was actually released from an atom. The performance of that job was done primarily by a few hundred people to whom the atom was very real indeed.

There are still many millions of people all over the world who would argue bitterly that nothing which they could not see, touch, feel, taste or smell could possibly exist. This in spite of the otherwise agreed-upon reality that, by manipulating certain changes which could not be seen, touched, felt, tasted or smelled, certain men caused reactions which could definitely be seen, heard and felt if they were not too close to be killed by the violence of the perceptive situation.

It is obvious that for different classes of people in the world today, the atom has different degrees of reality. For centuries the philosophers and scientists of mankind have been attempting to go back of this obvious fact and find the ultimate sort of reality which may be causing whatever varying reactions people had to the universe around them. This attempt to track down ultimates is a wild logjam which can waste and has wasted more hours of thought and effort than any other snag which has ever caught the human mind. For all practical purposes, reality consists of your perception of it and your perception of reality consists, to a large extent, of what you can communicate with other people. Your communication with other people depends to a large extent, on your affinity for them. Your affinity for people is determined largely by your understanding of the person and your agreement with him about reality. The three-way interrelationship between affinity, reality and communication not only underlies all that is done in Dianetics but explains many things about life, itself. In Dianetics, the abbreviation ARC (pronounced A—R—C rather than *arc*) is one of the most useful terms yet devised.

ARC DOWN

Since each of these three aspects of existence is dependent on the other two, anything which affects one of these will also similarly affect the others. It is very

difficult to suffer a reversal of affinity without also suffering a blockage of communication and a consequent deterioration of reality.

Consider a lovers' quarrel: One of the pair offers affinity in a certain way to the other. This affinity is either reversed or not acknowledged. The first lover feels insulted and begins to break off communication. The second lover, not understanding this break-off, also feels insulted and makes the break in communication even wider. The area of agreement between the two inevitably diminishes and the reality of their relationship begins to go down. Since they no longer agree on reality, there is less possibility of affinity between them and the downward spiral goes on. The only way of reversing the spiral is through raising of the necessity level of the individual, by the intervention of some outside agency which will force them to agree or communicate, or by dianetic processing. Unless one of these things happens, eventually all of the reality of the relationship which had grown up between this pair of lovers would vanish and both of the people would be damaged in their total reality, their total ability to communicate, their total capacity for affinity.

This downward spiral can be started not only at the point of affinity, but at any other point on the triangle. Many a soldier in the last war can testify that the breaks of communication between himself and his family occasioned by his enforced absence caused a definite diminishing of affinity with people for whom affinity lines had been very strong. This break of communication lines was the frequent cause for a serious diminishing of reality for the soldier and only sharply raised necessity level kept the situation from spiraling downward rapidly.

A denial of reality is one of the quickest ways to cause a person to become insane. Imagine your own feelings if you were to walk into your office in the morning and find that your desk was removed only to have your secretary, your boss, a receptionist, the president of the company and finally a psychiatrist inform you quite bluntly that the desk was actually there. This is a denial of reality in a way that should not seem to affect you personally but only two possible conclusions would be open to you: either you are crazy or they are crazy. There would be alternatives in between, such as "They are playing a trick on me," but this would probably be called paranoia and the result would be the same. One of the first reactions you might have to a situation of this type would be that you were quite angry at the people who kept insisting your desk was there. If they continued to resist it was there and you decided it was hopeless to convince them otherwise, you might become quite apathetic. You would undoubtedly break off communication with these people and the vicious spiral would have been started again.

ARC UP

Fortunately the spiral works both ways. Anything which will raise the level of affinity will also increase the ability to communicate and add to the perception of reality.

Falling in love is a good example of the raising of the ability to communicate and of a heightened sense of reality occasioned by a sudden increase in affinity. If it has happened to you, you will remember the wonderful smell of the air, the feeling of affection for the good solid ground, the way in which the stars seemed to shine brighter and the sudden new ability in expressing yourself.

If you have ever been alone, and in a dwindling spiral, only to have the telephone ring and the voice of a friend come across, you will have experienced the halting of a downward spiral through a lift in communication. This is particularly true if the friend happens to be a person with whom you converse easily and who seems to understand the communication which you try to give him. After such an experience, you are probably aware of a great deal more interest in the things around you (reality) and the increase of the feelings of affinity within you.

A troopship was slowly approaching the Golden Gate Bridge filled with troops who had been overseas for several months. As the ship slowly approached the bridge, all on board grew very quiet until at last no one was talking at all. Suddenly, as though