



November 19, 2017

Dear Attendees:

This is a working draft to explain my interest in having a Poet and Composer keynote a psychotherapy conference. It also provides my suggestions for the dialogue with me after their speech. There are both talking points and questions. As host, I want our keynote speakers to shine. I am flexible; I do not want my fantasies to alter their realities.

Keep in mind that my expertise in hypnosis is the foundation of my approach to eliciting adaptive states as a foundation of therapy, hence, my emphasis on “states” in this document.

Thanks for attending the Evolution Conference.

Jeff

What Can Therapists Learn from Musicians and Poets?

Jeffrey K. Zeig, Ph.D. in Dialogue with David Whyte and Rob Kapilow
Evolution of Psychotherapy Conference, 2017

WHEREAS:

Music and Poetry are inferential forms of communication; they suggest; they do not inform. They are evocative communications. In juxtaposition are science and mathematics, which are informative communications that strive to be concrete and unambiguous.

Music and especially Poetry harness the multiple level nature of communication -- something is communicated on the level of content; something different is communicated on the level of meaning.

Human communication has both a social level and a psychological level. Meaning is often extracted from sub-textual markers; an example is prosody, the musical quality of voice. Alter prosody and the meaning of a sentence changes. Sub-textual markers could be considered limbic communication because they represent fundamental ways of communicating that are used by animals lower than humans on the evolutionary scale.

Music is an evolution of the communicative sounds of lower animals. Meaning is extracted, and the change in state of the recipient is the target. Responding to music is a biological design, inborn in humans. Music takes communication into a limbic world to which words can only aspire.

Poetry is condensed evocative communication also designed to alter states. Poetry targets limbic goals.

Traditional therapy targets cortical goals. It recognizes that patients use multiple levels of communication, but it has been based in explaining to clients the client's underlying meaning. Traditionally, therapists have not explored the constructive use of multilevel, evocative communication.

In most forms of therapy communication is primarily concrete, based in the impartation of facts, which then can be investigated scientifically. But psychological problems are limbic, not cortical. Therapists need a technology to influence limbic adaptation. That technology can be learned by studying the grammar of Music and Poetry, a grammar that is surprisingly similar across all the arts.

Art is emotional communication. Art is experiential communication. Art awakens representations. Art is a show, don't tell medium. Art elicits. Art "orients toward." Art is covert communication. Art is limbic communication designed to change the state of the recipient.

Changing states is accomplished by orienting toward. It is ineffective to use concrete information to elicit a state, be it motivation, curiosity, well-being, or humor. If you want someone to laugh, tell them a joke, do not offer a directive.

The communicational mechanisms underlying Art are invisible to the recipient, which is desirable when the goal is to promote a change in state. These mechanisms are commonly used intuitively by the artist, but they can be harnessed intentionally. Perhaps Artists enter creative states to use the mechanisms that underlie their Art. Therapists do not explore adaptive therapist states.

Moreover, Artists explore the possibilities inherent to their medium. Therapists have not acted similarly. They do not use the possibilities inherent to communication. For example, therapists have not explored how to make therapy a visual Art. Artists are assumed to have their unique style as a foundation of their Art. Individual style is not a foundation of psychotherapy.

THEREFORE:

Since Music and Poetry have influenced more people than psychotherapy, therapists would be wise to learn from Composers and Poets.

POSSIBLE MECHANISMS TO DISCUSS

Here are 12 mechanisms that are common to both Music and Poetry:

1. Foreshadow; seeding; framing.
2. Strategic development; all elements advance the purpose. No hanging threads.
3. Recursion -- theme and variation.
4. The use of drama. For example, Beethoven's Fifth → "Jump into action."
5. Destabilization -- modulating tension. Use of the unexpected. Novelty. Over- and understate. Symmetry and asymmetry. Consonance and dissonance.
6. Ambiguity
7. Gift-wrapping a message → For example, couching meaning in a parable →
8. Metaphor
9. Precision
10. Multiple level constructions. The use of elaborations. Increase the density of the message to increase the impact.
11. Multisensory constructions.
12. Cohesion; a unified sensibility.

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS TO EXPLORE

The questions that follow serve as talking points for an interdisciplinary conversation about Art and therapy. The intention is to extract mechanisms that inform Art that be used to advance the goals of psychotherapy.

It is my hope that therapists will use any mechanism that the Musician and Poetry can teach us about the artistic grammar that underlies Music and Poetry and find a way to apply it to advance therapy.

Here are questions and themes for the discussion:

Possible questions:

Possible questions for both Whyte and Kapilow:

1. Comment on the evolution of Music/Poetry.
2. Define Music/Poetry in interactive terms, in terms of intended effect.
3. What are the procedures for becoming a poet/composer?
4. What is your unique style?
5. What is the "state" you inhabit when creating Music/Poetry?
6. What is essential in learning to access the "state" of being a Musician/Poet.

7. Illustrate a mechanism of your choice from the list above that can be used in Music/Poetry.

Specific questions for Whyte:

1. What is the area of poetry that your work explores?
2. What do you bring to poetry that has not been previously explored?
3. Does that explain your avoidance of using rhyme?
4. What is essential to the grammar of poetic construction?
5. Explain what I perceive to be your reluctance to deconstruct poetry.
6. Explain the intended effect of your use of repetition.
7. Explain how poetry evolved into a visual art. For example, e.e. cummings' poem "in Just-Spring..."
8. How do you teach students to be poets?
9. Explain how to prompt students to use metaphor?
10. How would you teach "orienting toward?"
11. How would you teach "modifying the level of tension" in a poem?
12. How would you "frame" a poem with an introduction and a satisfying ending?
13. How would you teach students strategic development?

Specific questions for Kapilow:

1. What is the area of music that your work explores?
2. What do you bring to music that has not been previously explored?
3. What is essential to the grammar of music?
4. Explain the value and limitations of deconstruction, one of your strengths in exploring what makes music great.
5. Explain/demonstrate theme and variation.
6. Explain why classical Music has so few moments of silence. Musical ideas are chained together.
7. How do you teach students to be Composers?
8. Explain how to prompt students to use music as metaphor
9. How would you teach students strategic development of a theme?
10. How would you teach "modifying the level of tension" in Music?
11. How would you "frame" a composition with an introduction and a satisfying ending?

Jeffrey K. Zeig, Ph.D.

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