

Tao of Strategy

Study Guide: *Completing Distinctions*

David R. Cross, Ph.D.*
Texas Christian University

January 5, 2010

Topics

In the fifth part of the course we focus on the following three topics:

- *Completing Distinctions*, a book which is many things:
 - An application of Daoist thought to the practice of therapy;
 - A synthesis of Eastern thought (Daoist philosophy) and Western thought (cybernetics);
 - An approach to therapy similar to other approaches such as brief therapy¹ and strategic therapy²;
 - An introduction to cybernetics (and cybernetics of cybernetics);
 - A really nice way to wrap up this course!
- *Cybernetics*, the science of communication, control, and feedback in living and mechanical systems.
- *Therapy*, which is the third domain of application investigated in this course.

Readings

- Douglas G. Flemons. *Completing distinctions: Interweaving the ideas of Gregory Bateson and Taoism into a unique approach to therapy*. Shambhala, Boston, 1991.

*www.davidcross.us

¹Frank Thomas and Thorana Nelson, editors. *Handbook of solution-focused brief therapy: Clinical applications*. The Haworth Press, New York, 2006

²Jay Haley and Madeleine Richeport-Haley. *The art of strategic therapy*. Brunner-Routledge, New York, 2003

- Jude Cassidy. Truth, lies, and intimacy: An attachment perspective. *Attachment & Human Development*, 3(2):121–155, 2001.
- Philip Lewin. The cybernetics of sanity. *Patterns: Newsletter of the American Society for Cybernetics*, pages 8–12, Fall 2007.
- Kathleen S. Long. The battle of the bulge: The obesity epidemic as a pathogenic system. *Patterns: Newsletter of the American Society for Cybernetics*, pages 1–7, Fall 2007.
- T. Berry Brazelton. In response to Louis Sander’s challenging paper. *Infant Mental Health Journal*, 21(1–2):52–62, 2000.

Outline

The Relation Between

1. *hierarchy of types and context* (see Figure 1)
2. *lineal vs circular causality*
3. *pattern vs entropy*
4. *positive vs negative feedback* (see Figure 2)
5. *digital vs analogical communication*
6. *energy vs information*
7. *Tao Te Ching*
8. *I Ching*

COMPLETION/(CONNECTION/separation)

- separation
- CONNECTION/separation
- COMPLETION/(CONNECTION/separation)
- TAO/((YIN/YANG)/(yin/yang))
- KNOWING/((KNOWER/KNOWN)/(knower/known))
- TAO/(KNOWING/not-knowing)
- WEI WU WEI/(KNOWING/not-acting)
- COMPLETION/(LIFE/death)

CONTRACTION/[SEPARATION/connection]

- SHORT-CIRCUIT/[CONSCIOUS KNOWING/purpose]
- ADDICTION/[DISJUNCTIVE SOLUTION/conjunctive problem]
- CONSCIOUS MIND/[FORGETTING/remembers]

From CONTRACTION/[SEPARATION/connection] to COMPLETION/(CONNECTION/separation)

- THERAPY IN CONTEXT/[SPECIALIZATION/health]
- CONTEXT IN THERAPY/(COMPLETION/contraction)
- LONG-CIRCUITS/(DISCIPLINE/*wu wei*)
- COMPLETING DISTINCTIONS/
(CHIASM/chasm)
(RE-CROSSING/recalling)
(EFFECT/defect)
- COMPLETION/(CONNECTION/separation)

Truth, Lies, and Intimacy

- Four Abilities Required for Intimacy
 - The ability to seek care
 - The ability to give care
 - The ability to feel comfortable with an autonomous self
 - The ability to negotiate
- Attachment, Intimacy, and Sexuality
 - The physiology of attachment and sexuality
 - An evolutionary perspective
 - Stability and change
- Truth, Lies, and Intimacy
 - A model
 - Maternal representations
 - Maternal behaviors
 - Infant attachment
- Conclusion
 - Open communication patterns
 - Feeling understood

The Battle of the Bulge

- The Problem
- A Pathogenic Dance
 - Problem-Host Dyad
 - Host-Expert Dyad
 - Expert-Problem Dyad
- Expansion of the Pathogenic System

The Cybernetics of Sanity

- Sanity: A secure anchoring within the life-world
- The Cybernetics of Self
- The Cybernetics of Sanity
- Twelve factors that serve to sustain our sanity
- The Embodied Self

Touchpoints for Intervention and Prevention

- A systems approach to understanding parent-infant interaction
 - Every member of a (family) system is affected by stresses to that system.
 - Every stress becomes an opportunity—an opportunity for learning to succeed or learning to fail.
- Abandoning the medical model³
- Supporting optimal infant development (see Figure 1)
- Sources that drive human development (see Figure 2)
 - Maturation of the Central Nervous System (CNS)
 - Internal feedback systems
 - External feedback systems
- An Interactive Model of Development (see Figure 3)
 1. The infant achieves homeostatic control over input and output systems (internal feedback processes).

³See also Kathleen Kovner Klein, editor. *Authoritative communities: The scientific case for nurturing the whole child*. Springer, New York, 2008.

2. The infant begins to attend to and use social cues to prolong and elaborate his states of attention (external feedback processes).
 3. Infant and parent begin to stretch the limits of the infant's capacity to (a) engage the external world and (b) withdraw to recover homeostatic balance (internal and external feedback processes).
 4. Within the dyad or triad, the infant is allowed to develop a sense of autonomy (see "Truth, Lies, and Intimacy," above).
- *The Touchpoints Model:* Predictable stresses are touchpoints for early intervention and prevention.



Order of Recursion Classification of Form Description of Process

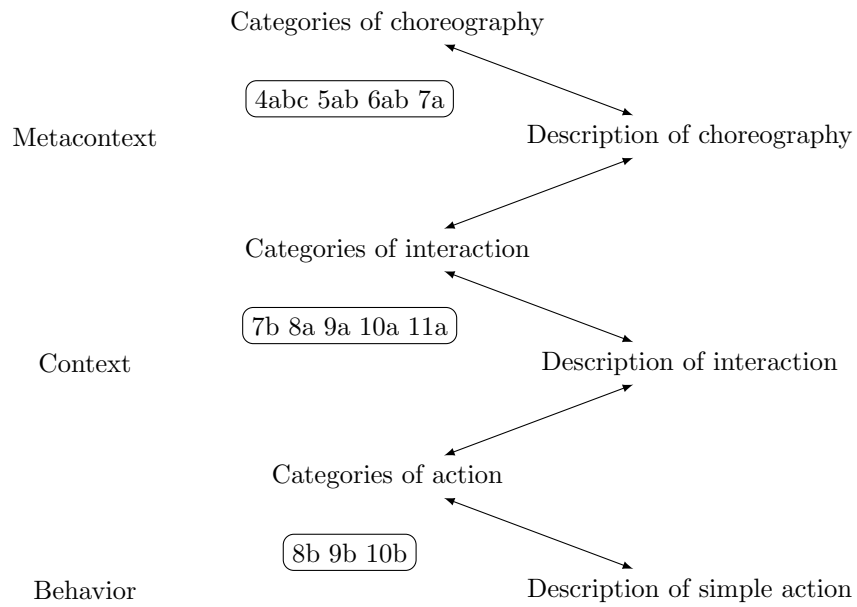


Figure 1: Sections of Sunzi's *Bingfa* overlaid on a taxonomy of cybernetic processes (see the Appendix from my Study Guide *Sunzi's Bingfa*, and Figure 1 from Keeney, *Aesthetics of Change*, 1983).

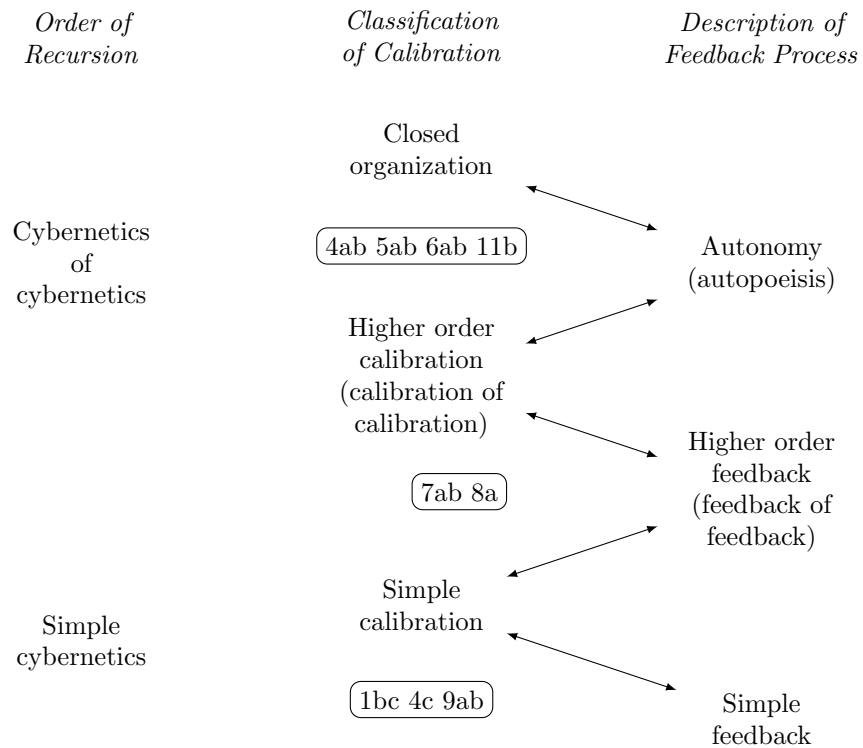


Figure 2: Sections of Sunzi's *Bingfa* overlaid on a taxonomy of cybernetic feedback processes (see the Appendix from my Study Guide *Sunzi's Bingfa*, and Figure 2 from Keeney, *Aesthetics of Change*, 1983).