

BOOKS

THE LANGUAGE OF CHANGE — ELEMENTS OF THERAPEUTIC COMMUNICATION

By PAUL WATZLAWICK

GUEST
BOOK
REVIEW

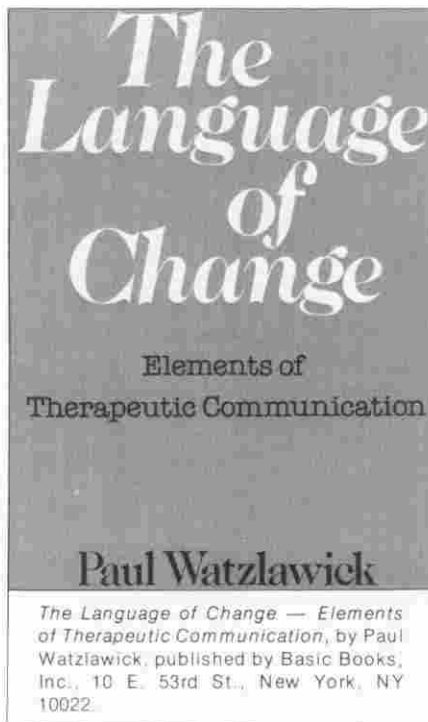


BY BENJAMIN I. YOUNG, JR.
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Although Dr. Watzlawick is addressing *therapeutic communication*, the implications and conclusions may have far-reaching effects on the training and development profession. For those who have been intrigued with the left and right brain hemispheric research findings and applications, this practical guide to the languages of our two brains will be required reading. For those interested in learning and change, this book will provide insights and practical guidance for more effective approaches to communicating from these perspectives with the whole brain.

The author suggests "*The fact that there exist these two 'languages' very strongly suggests that they must be representative of two different world images, for it is known that a language does not so much reflect reality as create it.*" Brain hemispheric research reveals the left-brain hemisphere specializes in translating perceptions into logical-analytical coding, and thus is responsible for reading, writing, counting, computing (thinking) and verbal responses. It is linear, sequential, time and space oriented. "*As the result of its specialization the left hemisphere runs the danger of not seeing the forest for the trees.*" The right hemisphere, on the other hand, specializes in the intuitive-holistic grasping of complex relationships, patterns and structures. It is nonlinear, free-associative without time and space limitations. The right hemisphere possesses the gestalt (consolidation) of the individual's *world images*.

Dr. Watzlawick describes a world image ". . . *as the most comprehensive, most complex synthesis of the myriads of experiences, convictions and influences, of their interpretation, of the resulting ascription of value and meaning*



to the objects of perception, which an individual can muster. It is not the world but a mosaic of single images . . . a pattern of patterns . . . meta-interpretations. . . ."

He quotes from Erwin Schrodinger's *Mind and Matter*: "*Every man's world picture is and always remains a construct of his mind and cannot be proved to have any other existence.*"

Dr. Watzlawick's thesis is that traditionally the right-brain hemisphere realms have been perceived and pictured as the uncon-

scious, dark side — archaic, metaphorical, impulsive, illogical — and when taken to the extreme — psychotic. The grammar and language developed to represent these realms follows from the world images created from judgmental descriptions. In addition, in most therapeutic situations he finds these realms to be habitually translated into the supposedly therapeutic language (left hemisphere) of reason and consciousness for the purpose of bringing about learning and change.

The author states, "*The hemisphere theory now confronts us with the possibility that the distinction of conscious and unconscious processes . . . may have to be modified. We are led to the assumption that we have two conscious minds which ideally are capable of harmonious complementary integration . . . but which may be unable to communicate with each other for the lack of a common language.*"

Dr. Watzlawick then builds on the world image of the right-hemisphere function assumption, the need for learning the conscious and therapeutic grammar and language of the right hemisphere. He cites the works of Dr. Milton H. Erickson in his use of hypnosis as one approach to get at the right hemisphere realms. After describing examples of right-hemisphere language (in the longest chapter of the book), he emphasizes methods of blocking the left hemisphere to get to the right. He describes the use of injunctive language, re-framing, and behavior prescriptions to extend this process. He

then deals with what he calls the "anything except that" attitude, referring to the "one thing" which, if alleviated, would cure the problem. He concludes the book with techniques of using the patient's language, pre-empting and therapeutic rituals.

The problem, as the author sees it, is in attempting to have therapists (and — from my view — educators, managers, trainers and developers as well as clients/learners) start from this new premise and utilize appropriate, new techniques within this context. The doctrines and personal

experiences of most of "their/our" particular therapy, philosophy and world view images unfortunately fit the traditional historic view of left and right-brain hemispheric realms.

He states, "In other words, what is possible and feasible in therapy is determined much more by the nature of the particular doctrine of therapy than by the nature of the human mind. . . . But if — as this book submits — the purpose of therapy is the change of the patient's predominately right hemisphere world image, and if. . . it is the reasonable analytical faculties

of the left hemisphere which will approve certain courses of action and reject others, then the perspective changes." It is precisely this change in perspective that would seem to pose the challenge to all of us.

The lack of right-hemispheric access, the lack of a common language for our two brains, and the influence of world images on learning and change would seem to offer fertile ground for taking a hard look at why some of our present approaches and practices may not be as effective as they could be. — Benjamin I. Young, Jr.

TRAINING FOR DEVELOPMENT

By ROLF P. LYNTON and UDAI PAREEK

This book is based largely on work done in India, and it is a paperback reprint of a book first published in 1967. Therefore, it is neither "current" nor "American." If that turns you off, I would like to use the rest of this review to turn you back on.

There are two reasons for paying close attention, especially if you are early in your training career. First, this is a good solid how-to-do-it-book. It's all here in great detail — from strategies and models to goal-setting, from individual motivation to group dynamics, from lectures and discussions to simulations and fieldwork.

Second, there is a coherent philosophy of training, which in my opinion is the book's most important theme. Lynton and Pareek both have been trainers and trainees, managers and scholars. They advocate that every training event serves the needs of all four orientations.

In short, this constitutes a very comprehensive textbook on the theory and practice of training. By "training" the authors mean developing action skills for "people-on-jobs-in-organizations." Development means learning how

to do better at work and doing it. The book grew out of the authors' collaboration in managing indus-

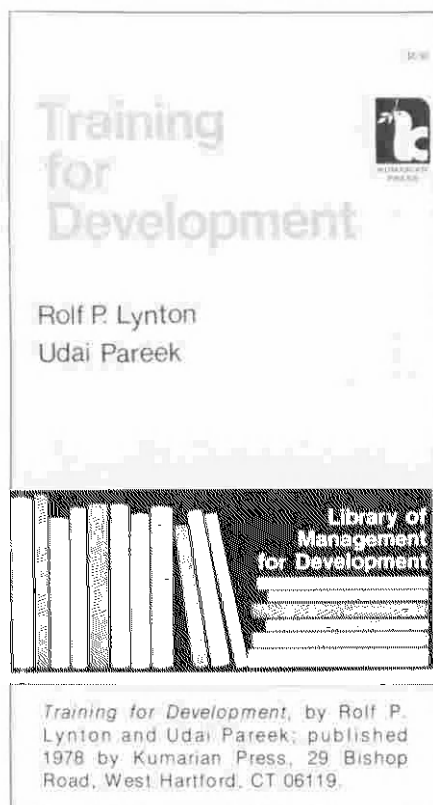
of people over long periods of time with limited resources under difficult conditions, applying existing theory, and learning all the while how to become better trainers and how to build better training organizations.

Training for development, as opposed to education for other purposes, imposes a tough set of standards on the trainer. It requires an extraordinarily large field of vision, in setting program goals consistent with the sponsor's goals, tapping personal motivation to learn, enlisting top-management support, evaluating results, building our own competence, knowing our own values. The book offers no easy answers to these persistent dilemmas.

This is not to say there are no answers at all. On the contrary, this is an encyclopedia of concrete tips on the do's and don'ts of program design — from determining needs, involving participants, choosing a site, drawing up a budget, selecting training methods, conducting workshops, insuring follow-up. The inclusion of boxes, tables and readings from other sources in each chapter

GUEST BOOK REVIEW

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trial and community development programs in an "emerging nation." They have trained large numbers