

PSYCHOLOGY OF WORK AND ORGANIZATIONS

The course lens: organization and institution

Understanding the distinction between organization and institution is essential.

Organization

Formal roles, structures, resources and coordination.
It gives work an observable architecture.

Institution

Shared meanings, authority, legitimacy and the pact that makes collective work possible.

Both dimensions shape superior–subordinate interactions.

Chapter 3: the bridge of transference

Earlier relational experience is carried into present authority—and onward into organizational life.

Past

Relational experiences shape expectations of care, control and recognition.

Present

The current superior–subordinate relationship becomes the stage for repetition.

Organization

Repeated patterns alter decisions, trust, coordination and the primary task.

TRANSFERENCE BRIDGE

Chapter 3: the bridge of transference

Transference categories

Idealizing transference

One attempts to recapture an original state of bliss by fostering a sense of union with one who “is omnipotent and perfect”. There is a strong tendency, in the process of idealization, to ignore this figure’s bad features and exaggerate the good ones.
The idealization is motivated by the fact that some people feel lost and unworthy unless they have someone they can admire. They thus become highly dependent on the idealized person.

Mirror transference

In the mirror transference reaction, someone attempts to restore an original state of bliss by viewing himself as perfect and all-powerful. Such persons thereby create a grandiose sense of self, demonstrating limited interest in the external world, to which they have ascribed all imperfections. There is a need for others who can “nourish” them through confirming and admiring responses. They need to display themselves to evoke the positive attention of others, as a way of counteracting a sense of worthlessness and lack of self-esteem.

Persecutory transference

Persecutory transferences all tend to be negative. They manifest themselves in interpersonal relationships as attitudes of hostility, moral masochism, and envy. The main interaction pattern is caused by the need to harm or attack the other person as a defensive reaction to one’s feelings of persecution. Feelings of persecution can also cause moral masochism behaviors. One feels guilty about one’s wishes to attack or one’s feelings of hostility. One wants to redeem one’s guilt about these feelings of hostility, so hostility is turned inward.

Chapter 3: the bridge of transference

Main take-aways

1. The ability to use power effectively to promote change requires an understanding of its less overt manifestations, particularly in interpersonal and group dynamics. Identifying transferential patterns may be crucial.
2. Promoting this awareness requires the awareness of leaders and followers of the existence of destructive interaction patterns, for awareness is the first step toward correction.
3. Organizations are less malleable and changeable than some organizational designers and managers think, particularly those lacking self-insight.

Chapter 4: the central question

How can superior–subordinate interaction become destructive?

Not through one personality alone, but through a pattern sustained between people and their setting.

The problem is relational

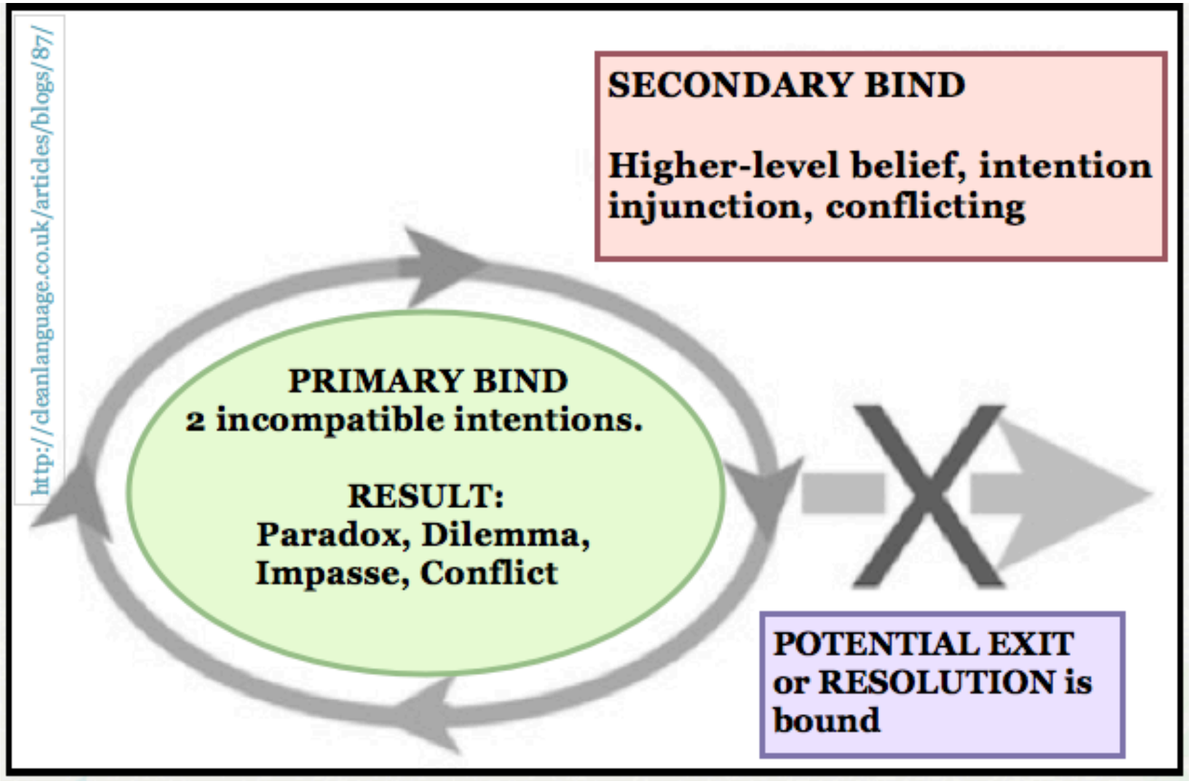
Destructive interactions are co-produced, asymmetrical and embedded in power. They organize what may be said, felt and done—and can displace attention from the primary task.

Chapter 4: Destructive interactions

Dysfunctional communication patterns

Gregory Bateson and his associates at Palo Alto have discovered that schizophrenics often experienced contradictory communication patterns within their family environment. They were especially concerned with the damage done by “double bind” communications, in which no conceivable response or interpretation can be consistent with what is being demanded.

Example: “Act spontaneously!”



From family interaction to organizational interaction

Binding

FAMILY
Closeness becomes compulsory; difference threatens belonging.

ORGANIZATION
Loyalty and dependence are rewarded over autonomy.

Delegating (Proxy)

FAMILY
One member acts, succeeds or rebels on another's behalf.

ORGANIZATION
The subordinate becomes an extension of the leader's ambition.

Expelling

FAMILY
Support is withdrawn and autonomy is demanded too early.

ORGANIZATION
Delegation becomes abandonment in a competitive field.

Organizational double binds

Message

“Tell me the truth.”

Counter-signal

“Do not challenge me.”

Effect

Speech narrows; people guess, comply or freeze. Confusion becomes organizational paralysis.

A double bind makes every available response feel wrong.

Three disruptive modes of interaction

Binding

LEADER
Requires closeness and loyalty

COLLABORATOR
Trades difference for belonging

SUFFERING
Entrapment; muted autonomy

Proxy

LEADER
Delegates the forbidden self

COLLABORATOR
Acts as an extension

SUFFERING
Overexposure; unstable identity

Expelling

LEADER
Withdraws support prematurely

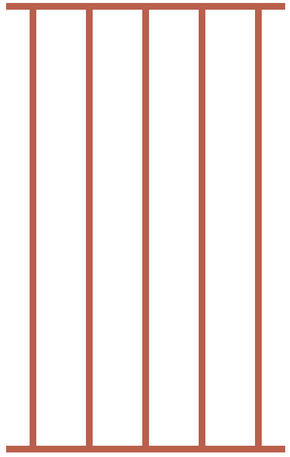
COLLABORATOR
Faces autonomy without holding

SUFFERING
Abandonment; fear; rivalry

Binding: the golden cage

Leader position

Closeness is equated with loyalty. Independence is read as rejection, so protection and control become difficult to separate.



Collaborator’s suffering

Belonging is secured by self-silencing. Initiative narrows and differentiation becomes emotionally costly.

The relationship protects belonging by sacrificing differentiation.

Proxy: the subordinate as an extended self

Leader position

Delegates risk, desire or transgression while retaining psychological ownership of the action.

Collaborator's suffering

Visibility and excitement come with instrumentalization: "my success" remains someone else's project.

The proxy may become a thrill provider, a flunkie or a go-between.

Expelling: abandonment and premature autonomy

Leader position

Support is withdrawn before capacity and authority are established. “Freedom” conceals emotional and managerial absence.

Collaborator’s suffering

The subordinate must improvise alone, reading every relationship as competition, danger or rescue.

The organization can come to feel like a jungle of power games.

Diana Company

Divide into the working groups and analyze the Diana Company using the lenses that have been presented today:

- What transference modes characterize the leaders and their followers?
- What types of interactional modes emerge in the case?
- What type of intervention would you suggest to tackle the problem using these theoretical lenses?

Breaking the vicious circle

Awareness

Name repetition and its emotional pull.

Third party

Introduce a reflective witness or mediator.

Boundaries

Clarify authority, role and legitimate difference.

Joint review

Reconnect interaction to the primary task.