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BY

ERVING GOFFMAN

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INTERPRETATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The Interaction Order

In the study of social life, it is common to take the concept of social order as central and to analyze concrete behavior in terms of the way it conforms to and departs from this model. It is in this sociological perspective that communication has been studied here.

Underlying each kind of social order we find a relevant set of social norms. These norms are ultimate social values, differing from other kinds of ultimate values in that they do not function as goals and objectives that are striven for but function, rather, as a guide for action and conduct, often establishing a kind of outer and inner limit to the range of activity that is permissible and desirable in the pursuance of a goal. Norms do not provide means and ends but criteria for making choices among them.

Norms are expressed in terms of rules regarding conduct and action. Norms, and the rules in which they are embodied, have a moral character; persons consider norms and rules to be desirable in their own right, to be binding in an obligatory way, and to be in some sense external to those who are guided by them. This does not mean, of course, that norms only function when they have been intracepted as ultimate values. There are many occasions when it is expedient for an unbelieving actor to

act in such a way as to give the appearance that he has acted in response to moral norms, or at least not to contradict openly the possibility that he has acted in this way.

Failure to obey the rules is sanctioned negatively. The sanction may be specific, formally established in advance, and administered by officially authorized bodies. The sanction may be informal and administered by diffuse, indirect social disapproval. Sanctions reinforce self-regulation, and together these forces lead persons to behave in a way that is regular and can be anticipated and in a way that is considered legitimate and socially proper.

The occasions when persons in Dixon come together and engage in spoken communication may differ, one from another, in basic ways: comings-together may differ in number and identity of participants; in the kind of ties that bind those who participate; in the motive, the intent, and the function of the coming-together; in the social place and context in which the coming-together occurs; and in many other ways.

On occasions in which islanders engage in face-to-face spoken communication, the conduct and action of participants are guided and integrated together under the influence of many different social norms. Action is guided and integrated by the rights and obligations pertaining to kinfolk, property-holders, contractees, citizens, friends, guests, and the like, and by standards, such as efficiency, economy, and respect for tradition. In one situation the social orderliness that prevails will be largely determined by one set of norms; in another situa-

tion a different set of norms will provide the principal guides for action.

In this study I have attempted to abstract from diverse comings-together in Dixon the orderliness that is common to all of them, the orderliness that obtains by virtue of the fact that those present are engaged in spoken communication. All instances of engagement-in-speech are seen as members of a single class of events, each of which exhibits the same kind of social order, giving rise to the same kind of social organization in response to the same kind of normative structure and the same kind of social control. Regardless of the specific roles and capacities which an individual employs when he engages in interaction, he must in addition take the role of communicator and participant; regardless of the particular content of the spoken communication, order must prevail in the flow of messages by which the content is conveyed.

It is possible to consider any particular social order in a crudely functional way and say that it serves to ensure that a particular set of human needs or objectives will be fulfilled in an orderly, habitual, and cooperative manner. From this point of view, a preliminary distinction may be made among three elements: a particular set of needs or objectives; a set of practices, conventions, and arrangements through which these ends are fulfilled; and the particular set of norms which supports and bolsters these arrangements. The system of practices and arrangements considered in this study brings order not to economic life or political life but to communication.

In work situations where constant communication is required among participants for the governance of work-flow, and where there is some barrier--social or physical--to ordinary communication, a special communication system commonly arises. An illustration may be taken from Dixon dock work. During the loading and unloading of boats at the Dixon pier, the man operating the winch is often cut off, aurally or visually, or both, from the man in the best position to guide the cargo as it is lowered or raised in the hatch or in the hold. To fulfill the winch operator's need for constant information as to the position of the cargo he is moving, a language of hand-signals is available for signalling above the noise and beyond the physical barriers of the operation. By means of this system of communication, any man in the work team can initiate an extended sequence of directional commands to the winch operator or retransmit commands to him from someone in the hold whom the man on the winch cannot see or hear. In order to reinforce this communication system in which any member of a crew can, at any moment, take over command of the crew, it is useful for all members of the crew, regardless of rank on the job or rank with respect to wider social statuses, to respect one another as persons whose independent judgment will be sound and as persons from whom it is possible to take commands. Work needs are fulfilled by a communication system, and the communication system is in turn buttressed by moral beliefs.

Another example may be cited. There are times of crisis for members of the Dixon community when it is imperative that

any adult in the community be able to contact quickly any other member of the community. Accident or sudden sickness, rearrangements for an oncoming social, news of a job opening, last minute cancellations of cooperative fishing or crofting ventures--these are examples of such crises. The need to adapt to these extraordinary situations is fulfilled on the island by means of an emergency communication system.

In Dixon there were at the time of the study fourteen telephones, some located in public buildings such as the hotel and post-office, and others located in private houses, especially the houses of those persons, for example car-hirers or county officials, who needed a telephone for occupational reasons. Most of the hundred-odd households and regular places of work in the community were connected with each of the other houses or places of work by a known communication channel involving two telephones and two or more households or offices. In cases of emergency, it was understood that any adult who wished to speak to any other adult could walk to the nearest phone, contact the phone nearest the ultimate recipient, and have the individual who answered the phone relay the message to the ultimate recipient or call him to the phone. This communication system fulfilled the needs of crisis situations so that, from the point of view of emergencies, the community was saturated with telephones.

It will be apparent that the persistence of such a communication system depends on the presence and maintenance of good will. Those who do have phones must be willing to extend favors to those who do not, and those who do not have phones must

not abuse the courtesy of those who do. This good will is due partly to the presence of kinship ties that interconnect almost all the families, partly to the age-mate solidarity generated by a shared "school-hood," and partly to the fact that islanders know enough about one another to appreciate a crisis from the point of view of the persons involved in it. And reinforcing these norms of mutual aid is the sensitivity of most islanders to the widespread disapproval that would be accorded them if they refused communication courtesies or unduly exploited the willingness of others to extend them.

Again, then, we see that particular needs are adapted to by means of a communication system and that this system in turn is stabilized and buttressed by means of social norms which underlie it.

When we take as our unit of study not a particular work situation with its particular communication requirements, nor crisis situations, but the daily social life of an entire community, then the connection between needs, communication system, and moral norms becomes less easy to be sure about but perhaps more interesting and significant.

In Dixon, as presumably in any community, there is a need for information to be able to flow through an almost infinite number of channels and networks, for lines of communication to be formed, altered, and re-formed in a fluid and constantly changing pattern. This flow of information is a condition of any social process--cooperation, conflict, accommodation, and even avoidance. In the criss-crossing of social adjustments in

an isolated community, and in the multiple entanglements of its relatively self-sufficient division of labor, it is important that any two individuals--at least any two social adults--be able to form a link in a communication chain should the need for it arise. And it is important that any occasion of spoken communication terminate in such a way that all participants feel that should a need arise any one of them will be in a position to enter again into spoken communication with any other of the participants.

The communication needs of everyday life in Dixon, in the multitude of situations where no special communication problem is found, are satisfied by a communication system of rules, practices, and arrangements giving rise to a unit of communication activity that is here called interplay. As described in Part Four of the study, we find that rules are observed as to who may enter into conversation with whom, upon what topics and with what pretext, and for what length of time. A set of significant gestures is employed as a means of initiating and terminating a spate of communication and as a means for those who are to participate to accredit each other as legitimate participants. A single focus of thought and of visual attention tends to be maintained, and the concerted visual attention of the participants tends to be transferred smoothly from one participant who is speaking to another who wishes to speak next, the transfer being effected by expressive cues or "clearance signs." By appropriate gestures, recipients convey to the sender the fact that they are according him their attention. Interruptions and

lulls are regulated so as not to disrupt the flow of messages. Messages that are not part of the officially accredited flow are modulated so as to interfere only in a limited way with the accredited messages. Nearby persons who are not accredited participants visibly desist in some way from exploiting their communication position and modulate their own communication, if any, so as not to provide difficult interference. A "working acceptance" is maintained, through which participants who may be in real disagreement with one another give temporary lip-service to actions and judgments that bring them into agreement. There is a tendency for complex judgments to be made concerning each participant's social attributes, and for these judgments to determine the relative average length and the relative frequency of each participant's messages. Finally, each spate of communication during which a given set of participants is accredited and a single moving focus of attention is maintained tends to be arranged into a sequence of discrete, relatively self-sufficient interchanges, and each of these interchanges or communication spurts contains one or more rounds of statement and reply.

The system of rules and conventions which guides the flow of messages during spoken communication is a normative system. Not only can it be anticipated that islanders will adhere to these communication conventions but also that they are, in some sense, morally obliged to do so. When one of these conventions is broken, it is not the state or the community that is offended, but only the other participants, and in most cases they are obliged to sanction the offender in an inexplicit roundabout

way. Thus, conventions for guiding spoken communication on the island constitute the kind of normative system which is sometimes called etiquette.

The communication etiquette which brings order to the flow of messages during spoken interaction constitutes a practical communication system for the varied interactions of everyday life on the island. Underlying this etiquette there is a set of social norms which apparently gives communication conventions stability, strength, and flexibility. For summary purposes, these norms can be roughly placed into two broad groupings. There are norms obliging persons to inhibit their immediate response to a situation and to convey a calculated one; and there are norms which oblige the individual to act in just the opposite way, to express himself spontaneously, candidly, and without consideration of the likely response of others to him. These two sets of norms were found to be operative wherever, whenever, and with whomsoever spoken communication occurred on the island.

Of the norms which lead islanders to inhibit their immediate response during interaction, three central ones may be cited. First, the individual is obliged to suppress his "real" feelings about those to whom he is talking and act in such a way as to show constant regard for their positively-defined attributes and at the same time constantly avoid a show of concern for their negatively-valued attributes. In other words, considerateness and respect must be constantly shown for others present. Secondly, the participant is obliged to hold himself

sufficiently off from all kinds of ties, constraints, and involvements for the duration of the interaction so that he will be free, at least to a degree, to sustain the role of communicator, to follow the course of the interaction wherever it may lead. Typically the participant will withdraw himself from involvements which occurred prior to the interaction and from those which are scheduled to occur after the interaction has terminated, lest these external involvements strain, impoverish, or trivialize the self that he makes available for the interaction. He attempts to refrain from uncontrolled emotional responses to a passing object of attention, so as not to jeopardize the continued poise and readiness he exerts as an interactant. And he attempts to exercise restraint in his demands for attention, praise, and other indulgences, showing that his capacity as communicator has not been overpowered by other orientations. Thirdly, the individual is obliged to conduct himself so that the impression he initially gives of himself, and which others use in building up a framework of response to him, will not be discredited later in the interaction by gaffes, boners, disclosures, and the like, nor seem to others to be pretentious. These three inhibitory norms, considerateness, self-control, and projective circumspection, seemingly modify and guide the way in which an islander performs every one of his acts while he is a participant in spoken interaction.

Opposing these inhibitory norms, there is a set of norms obliging islanders to become immediately and unthinkingly involved in any interaction in which they have been accredited as

participants. A participant must not seem to be indifferent to the interaction or disdainful of it. He is expected to become sufficiently involved in the proceedings at hand to be unself-conscious about his role in the interaction, and it is expected that he will desist from worrying about the impression he is making so that he can give his main attention to the subject matter of the communication. He is obliged to be sufficiently honest and candid in a linguistic way, and sincere and unaffected in an expressive way, to give his co-participants confidence in the validity of the information they are receiving from him. And he is expected to give at least some expression to his real feelings, regardless of the price he may have to pay for so doing.

At all times and in all places islanders tended to manifest a fundamental action-tendency relative to communication. Whenever an individual could be associated with an act or event, there was a tendency for others to take this happening as an expression of the characteristics of the individual (whether or not they were justified in doing so), especially as an expression of the conceptions he had of himself and of others. Further, there was a tendency for individuals to show deep concern for the judgments and evaluations made of them, whether these judgments were conveyed linguistically or expressively, and whether they carried any immediate instrumental consequences or not. Finally, islanders in all their actions tended to take into consideration the "meaning" or interpretation the others would be likely to place upon these actions (whether in fact the

others did or did not do so) and guide their actions accordingly. In brief, islanders found that they must act under what might be called conditions of great expressive responsibility.

It is a crucial characteristic of face-to-face communication that a host of acts and events inevitably becomes available for aptly expressing the conceptions participants have of one another. In order to exert expressive responsibility, islanders must exert thorough and continued care of their behavior while in the immediate presence of others. It is in terms of this action-tendency and the unique communication conditions of face-to-face communication that we can understand how communication norms are related and articulated to the set of conventions which guides the flow of messages. The rules that messages ought not to be interrupted, or that a participant ought not to withdraw from an interaction before the others are prepared for this, or that a speaker ought to be given attention, etc., function to ensure that orderly communication will prevail, but the manner in which these general rules are to be applied to a particular case and often the motive for applying the rules seem to rest on the fact that interruptions, leavetakings, inattentions, and the like are aptly designed--apart from their role in the ordering of messages--as signs for expressing the judgments that participants make of one another. Islanders tended to decide how to conduct themselves in the presence of others by considering the interpretation that others would be likely to place upon this action, but in guiding action on this basis, islanders found themselves acting so that messages could flow in

an orderly fashion.

It has been suggested that the Dixon community has certain general communication needs, and that these needs are satisfied through a set of conventions and practices giving rise to what has been called interplay. Reinforcing this system of communication we find norms pertaining to communication: norms requiring individuals to inhibit their immediate response to the situation and at the same time to involve themselves spontaneously in the interplay, and norms requiring the individual to act with expressive responsibility. There is perhaps a kind of functional relationship linking the needs, the communication system, and the norms. We may start with a norm and see how it facilitates the maintenance of the communication system, and how the system in turn facilitates the fulfillment of the needs; or we may start at the other end of the chain, with the needs, and see how they would tend to give rise to the communication system, and how in turn the communication system tends to facilitate the development of interaction norms. For example, if information is to be conveyed from one individual to another (this being a general need or requirement for community life), then it is useful to have a set of communication conventions which lead a prospective recipient to enter communication when called into it, to give uninterrupted and uninterrupting attention to the message until it is terminated, and to signal back to the sender that the message has been correctly received. In turn, the recipient follows these conventions because he feels that the sender will interpret any failure to do so as an expression of disrespect, for

the interruption of another's message or a failure to accord him visual attention is, aside from its role in a communication system, a vehicle aptly designed for conveying an expression of disrespect. (Thus one can see that respect for the other has its function as a guide for face-to-face communication, and hence need not be exerted, and relatively speaking is not exerted, for those who are not present.) Or, starting from the other end of the chain, we can say, for example, that an individual feels obliged to show himself in control of his desires and his involvement, and that, given a tendency for every act to be examined for expressive significance, he will be required to show that he is content with the attention quota accorded him and that he is not unduly embroiled in events that have occurred before the interplay or not too much at the mercy of events that are to occur after its termination. By acting in such a way as to express continuously the fact that he is in control of himself, the individual places himself in a position to initiate interplay and to continue as an effective participant in it. And by being in a position to continue as a participant wherever the communication may lead, the individual ensures that he will not constitute, on any occasion, a block to the free flow of information in the community. Similarly, the minimum of respect that all islanders show to one another means that all islanders will feel obliged, under proper circumstances, to treat any other islander as a co-participant in communication, and the relative degree of respect that any particular islander has for any other particular islander has the effect of determining the allocation

of attention quota, hence providing a guide for the flow of messages. And, too, while the obligation islanders feel to pay ritual homage to each other by expressive gestures of respect requires that each make himself available to the other for communication, the obligation to exert self-control and not convey an unfavorable judgment of the other requires that no individual take undue advantage of this availability of the other.

Interaction Euphoria and Dysphoria

On some occasions when islanders engage in spoken communication, all participants tend to feel at ease, unselfconscious, and unembarrassed. Interactional euphoria prevails. No one senses a false note. The way in which one participant is involved in the interaction does not disrupt a proper degree of spontaneous involvement on the part of others. At such times a balance seems to be achieved between action which is guided by the inhibitory norms and action which is guided by the expressive ones. On such occasions respect for others and self-control seem to be so deeply intracepted or so well feigned that the individual can act in a relatively spontaneous way and yet not cause offense to others.

On other occasions when islanders engage in spoken communication, one or more participants may feel out of countenance, flustered, out of place, or offended. Some interactional dysphoria prevails. At such times an imbalance is found in the opposing norms of communication.

In order to avoid dysphoric situations, or counteract those which have not been successfully avoided, participants regularly employ strategies, that is, rational adaptations to the

normative requirements of interaction. For example, ruses are employed by an individual in order to secure a degree of approval from others that would cause offense to them if openly sought after. So, too, strategies such as discretion, hedging, unseriousness, feigned indifference, non-observance, etc., are employed in order to guard against committing offenses oneself and in order to make it easier for others not to commit an offense.

The occurrence of interaction tensions and disharmonies is extremely common on the island. In response to this fact, one general strategy seems always and everywhere to be employed. The requirement that participants exert self-control and respect for others is allowed to establish a working acceptance through which official linguistic lip-service is given to the fiction that all present are behaving properly, that all are in agreement on matters of significance, and that all respect one another. And underneath this surface of agreement, the vast expressive equipment that becomes available when persons are in each other's presence is used to convey a contrary view, a view that would disrupt the working acceptance were it conveyed openly and officially. This undercurrent of communication, now taking the form of furtive coalitions, now taking the form of innuendo, hints, and oblique thrusts, provides the forbearant actor with a safe channel of free expression. Apparently this two way-pull on communication assures that persons with different views and even personal dislikes of one another will yet be able to tolerate

one another long enough for information to flow back and forth between them.

The Special Characteristics of Interaction Order

The social order that obtains when persons are engaged in spoken communication--by virtue of being so engaged--possesses some characteristics that are perhaps less pronounced in other types of social order.

First, interactional improprieties are typically sanctioned in an indirect and inexplicit way. When an individual commits an interaction offense, he still remains someone for whom respect must be shown; interactionally speaking, to sanction him openly is only to make matters worse. The punishment itself would be a crime. Thus we find many interactions in which one or more participants are required to exercise forbearance and to tolerate a sense that things are not going right or that improprieties have been committed. Strategies and unofficial communications must be employed as a means of responding to offenses in an inoffensive way. Only the young who are not yet social persons can be openly sanctioned for an interaction offense. The young have no social face to lose, hence they can be openly criticized without producing the embarrassing scene of someone losing face.

Secondly, there are many requirements of behavior which the actor in a certain sense is not made morally responsible for. Thus a person who disrupts euphoria by bragging may be indirectly sanctioned, but a person who disrupts it because he has a tic or is cross-eyed is usually merely avoided if possible, there being

little desire on the part of the avoiders for the avoidance to be taken as a sanction. We desire persons to be unselfconscious and not to become flustered easily, but a certain kind of guiltlessness attaches to those who offend in this way.

Finally, there is the paradoxical fact, less true, perhaps, of other kinds of social order, that interactants are required to behave in a way that is at once conformative to an obligatory pattern and at the same time spontaneous and unthinking. Here a voluntaristic scheme of analysis in which unthinking response is a residual category seems somewhat unsuitable. We must attempt to account for the uniformity of interactive and expressive behavior, and its obligatory nature, by suggesting that at some stage in the interactant's life proper affective conduct was formally or informally impressed upon him; and we must attempt to account for its spontaneous nature, and the requirement that it be spontaneous, by suggesting that at the moment of interaction the participant is so well and so deeply trained in the expressive patterns of his group that he can conduct himself properly without thought.

Suggestions for Research

Experience in the field suggests that rules regarding communication conduct are so automatically taken for granted, both by those who are studied and by those who do the study, that it is convenient to depend on extraordinary events to open our eyes to what ordinarily occurs. In situations where ordinary spoken communication cannot prevail, extraordinary arrange-

ments with high visibility to the student are required. On this assumption, then, some lines of further research in spoken communication can be suggested.

First, classroom behavior seems a useful area for study because in a classroom children can be observed who have not yet learned to keep themselves in control or respect others and yet are sensitive to the fact that they ought to conduct themselves in a mannerly way. In addition, a classroom provides an excellent opportunity for an observer, to sit amidst interaction and take notes. Secondly, there are natural field situations in which spoken communication regularly occurs and regularly presents an interaction problem. In these situations a fundamental requirement of interplay--a requirement that may be met with ease and success in other situations--is not fulfilled or not easily fulfilled; participants must give special attention to it and in so doing often make it easier for the student to observe the significance of it. Thus the requirement that participants act in a spontaneous way is difficult to study in intimate family interaction, because uncalculated involvement is apparently easy to maintain; in staged interaction, as in that which occurs during television shows, spontaneous involvement must be convincingly feigned under difficult circumstances, providing a fruitful context in which to study the role of spontaneity. So, too, the role of tact and emotional control, by which participants conceal or overlook facts which might disrupt euphoria, might be profitably studied in situations such as court hearings, where persons are either not allowed to act tactfully

or feel obliged not to do so, for here the consequences of failure to exert tact would be readily perceptible. Thirdly, it would be fruitful to study types of interaction which were similar to spoken interaction in some sense, but which provide very restricted examples of interplay. Examples are found in the conversation-like interaction that occurs in the moves and counter-moves of card and board games, fencing, wrestling, and the like. These interplay-like activities provide simplified model-like versions of spoken communication, the rules and conventions of the activity highly restricting the type of messages and the type of conduct that is allowed. Another fruitful context for study is to be found in work situations which require a constant exchange of communication for the guidance of work and yet which for some reason make it difficult to employ spoken communication. Examples are found in the stock market, in cargo-loading depots, on railroads, etc. In these contexts, too, a simplified kind of interplay occurs, study of which might throw light on more complicated speech systems. In all these contexts it would be relatively easy to study the relationships among communication needs, communication systems, and communication norms.