

Rationality, Emotion, and Belief Revision: Waller's Move Beyond CBT & REBT

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ABSTRACT: Sarah Waller proposes that cognitive therapists and philosophical counselors ought to consider the feelings of the client of paramount importance in belief system change rather than the rationality of the belief system. I offer an alternative strategy of counseling that reinstates the place of rational belief revision while still respecting the importance of emotions. Waller claims that, because of the problem of under-determination, the counseling goal of rational belief revision can be trumped by the goal of improved client affect. I suggest that, if we consider a different ontology for the domain of counseling - one whose objects are dialogues (the goal of counseling becomes greater information of dialogues), we can accommodate a place for emotions in rational belief revision. I then note some limitations of the new proposal and the possibility of incommensurability in the comparison of our different views.

Waller (2001) has recently put forward a novel strategy for philosophical counseling. She maintains that many theories of cognitive therapy and philosophical counseling hold that, because beliefs and emotional states are mutually influencing and reinforcing, beliefs can be implicated in sustaining the emotional states that they describe and explain. This explains, she says, why some cognitive therapies work. More controversially, she claims that, "the feelings of the client, rather than the rationality of the belief system, are paramount in belief system change" (Waller 2001 p. 30). This claim, she believes, puts her at odds with most conventional theories of cognitive therapy with which she agrees in other respects.

Waller contends that there are several virtually empirical equivalent belief networks that can fully describe any given affective condition. She says, "Indeed, the emotion/belief interaction is an excellent example of under-determination of theory by evidence -- emotional states will always be more primitive than belief networks and so can be fully described by more than one. . . . The therapist or counselor (with the client) is at liberty to remove one belief network and replace it with another network" (ibid.). There will be multiple equally rational ways to account for how one feels. So therapists must have some other basis for advocating one

set of beliefs to their clients. Waller claims that this other basis is, and ought to be: 'pick sets of beliefs that are likely to improve how the client feels'. One might be tempted to infer that because there may be many empirically equivalent and equally coherent belief sets there need be no rational constraints on belief choice. She says,

The break between my form of philosophical counseling and the [Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy] REBT family is clear. Ultimately, the counselor's suggestion to interpret evidence as evidence for the second belief system is not itself rational, but only serves to make the client happier. REBT is based on notions of absolute truth and absolute justification: if the client were to examine his or her beliefs, he or she would find that many are not well justified and do not lead to truth. The REBT therapist then assists the client in finding better justified beliefs, and, once closer to truth, presumably leads a happier life. My form of philosophical counseling does not subscribe to notions of absolute justification (i.e., reasons that lead to truth with perfection and epistemic certainty) or to notions of absolute truth. While we can still use the tools of REBT, and critique the beliefs of the client on grounds of consistency and cohesion, ultimately the choice between belief systems is based on making the client feel better and not on proximity to truth. Indeed, if we were to find that one belief system is true, there is no guarantee that happiness would follow from its adoption (ibid.).

Waller implies that the rationale for advocating a choice among sets of beliefs ultimately depends merely upon the alternative belief set's ability to improve affect¹. Following Waller's lead then, if a counselor's strategies are guided by the client's greater happiness and yet happens to produce irrational behaviors, then so be it. Although I am sympathetic to Waller's concern with feelings and agree that in practice a belief system does not necessarily trump another belief system just

¹. But, one may still hold that it *is* rational to choose a system of beliefs that appears to have greater coherence than another. Waller is not interested in these cases however. The difficulty she sees is in choosing among belief system replacements that are *equally* more coherent than the system of beliefs being replaced. On Waller's theory the additional requirement of greater happiness is independent of rationality.

because we're convinced ² of the greater rationality of one and not the other, it's quite another step to claim "the feelings of the client . . . are paramount in belief system change."

Waller contends that cognitive therapies are mistaken in relying on rational belief revision where rational means aiming towards greater truth. In a bold move, Waller sidesteps the realists' interpretation of belief revision that aims toward greater verisimilitude advocated by most cognitive therapies. She reminds us that, "... Justification has many measures (correspondence, consensus, and coherence, to name three)" (ibid.). She goes on to suggest that progress is made when the replaced belief network has greater coherence.

With greater coherence comes greater explanatory power. But not just any greater coherence will do. The goal of Waller's strategy is to hit upon a set of beliefs that will influence and change emotional states in desired ways. And importantly, the desired change of emotional states need not depend upon the rationality of the new belief network.

An account of the relation between emotion and belief would go a long way toward describing/ explaining the efficacy of talk therapies such as Rational Emotive Behavioral Therapy (REBT) and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT); and could provide a programmatic grounding for many methods of philosophical counseling ³. Waller takes a step in that direction by suggesting that this relation (whatever else it may be) is one of under-determination. But what is this relation supposed to be? According to Waller cognitive therapies, "accept a deep and mutually influential relationship between emotions and beliefs," and she proposes that, "emotions form a nebulous grounding for more sharply defined belief states" (ibid.). Furthermore, belief systems describe and explain emotional states, according to Waller. Although, Waller provides excellent examples of the strategy she proposes, her analysis stops

². Not if the grounds for the conviction is greater Truth in some old fashioned correspondence sense. The displacement of one belief system with another is almost always certain to be more complex even when truth is given high regard.

³. I reserve the possibility that perhaps our current use of terms like belief and emotion are not unlike the use of phlogiston in the a science of an earlier time.

short of a generalizable specification of the objects of the relation between emotion and belief.⁴ I will suggest an analysis that I believe respects the importance of rationality and lends support to the claim that feelings are essential to (if not paramount in) belief system change. In the process, however, I may do violence to the crucial folk notions of feelings and belief.

Waller seems to have targeted a narrow construal of rationality as motivated by an aim toward greater truth. We do have available an alternative approach to belief choice that embraces Waller's dismissal of verisimilitude, while attending to the feelings of the client, and yet appears rational. I will sketch such an alternative and look at a different threat to rationality that the alternative faces, incommensurability. Examining dialogues for the possibility of incommensurability can be an important tool of philosophical counseling and has advantages over conventional psychotherapy.

The domain of philosophical counseling

Because philosophical counseling is still an emerging discipline, it allows us to think outside the box. It is still possible to challenge conventional notions about what counseling's subject matters should be. And, it is crucial that I do so. In following sections I will put forward the skeleton of a counseling methodology that attempts to preserve the rationality of counseling by changing the objects attended to by therapists and by amending the objective of counseling.

"Social Rehabilitation Therapy" is a generic term that covers a wide range of different forms of treatment. Some Social Rehabilitation theorists hold that therapists model and display demand properties of social interactions. There is a family of concepts among social psychologists that put social identities as more basic than individual identities. In *Social Being*, for example, Rom Harre says:

⁴ Waller's strategy is helpful. You give some examples. Various feelings are then associated with belief systems of that context. But, this leaves us at a loss when we try to get a general account of what counts as a feeling and what doesn't. Maybe "feeling" doesn't have necessary and sufficient conditions. In that case, the best we could do is a list of prototypes and abstract from these a sort of aggregate prototype -- it's 'as if' _____ were the properties of 'feeling' or _____ were markers for feeling. This is a perilous road I fear. But, It may have some rewards in terms of directing research programs for future investigations

'Identity' is a complex concept. It can refer to the oneness of each of us as unique and individual human beings. Philosophers usually call this 'personal identity'. It can also refer to the similarities we bear to others, the types we exemplify.

Psychologists usually call this 'social identity'. An identity crisis is prompted by the question 'What sort of person am I?' not by the question. 'Which person am I?' I can be mistaken about the former, and may even need to take trouble to find out. I cannot be mistaken about the latter and the idea of finding out makes no sense (1993 p. 2).

Stanley Strong provides an account of social rehabilitation theory derived from the pioneering work of Cassier and Levin according to which therapy is "the outcome of client perceptions of demand properties of situations, of others' dispositions, or of their own dispositions" (cited in Snyder & Donelson 1991, p 140). "Social Rehabilitation" means any treatment that subscribes to a thesis that incorporates the notion that therapists model and display demand properties of social interactions. Eric Berne, for example, claims that therapy, ". . . is developed and maintained in the context of [social] relationships, and that through changing those relationships more rewarding and satisfying ways of living can be established". (cited in Kaplan & Sadock 1989, p 429). Kaplan and Sadock (1989) notes that, "Kurt Luwin, the founder of Field Theory, argued that 'people function within fields, defined as an interaction of environmental and interpersonal factors'" (p 430). These social rehabilitation models of therapy suggest an alternative way to look at how emotions and beliefs are connected to counseling.

I contend that we should consider broadening the domain of therapy under examination and I advocate changing its focus away from the self talk of individuals and toward conversational interactions between conversants. It is only in this way that we will be able to defend Waller's proposal against the charge of irrationality. Waller is left with an individual's choosing beliefs on the basis of greater happiness for himself or herself alone. Comparing

individually held beliefs with beliefs of conversants and community beliefs sometimes restores rational belief choice.

The goal of the alternative conception of therapy I propose is not greater verisimilitude of an individual's belief networks as in conventional cognitive therapy. Although, coherence plays a role similar to the role it plays in Waller's strategy, the goal of counseling is not simply the client's greater happiness. The goal of counseling that I advocate is improved communication. This move changes the object of therapy away from individuals and toward dialogues.

Rational valuation of competing systems of belief begins relationally

Prospects for counseling clients toward rational belief choice will be only as good as our notion of rationality itself. If we give up on greater verisimilitude as our primary guide to rationality what can take its place? Coherence looms as a likely replacement. But, if we take Waller's worries about under-determination seriously, it appears that coherence can be trumped by the aim of improved feelings. So, it may be helpful to incorporate feelings together with coherence in our notion of rational choice. To affect this incorporation, we need to reflect that, to some extent, judging an agent as acting rationally involves taking his or her aims seriously and there is little doubt that greater happiness is a common aim.

But this still won't do. We live in an ever changing environment where our aims are multiple and changing. Importantly, it is rare that the goal you are now focusing upon will match the goal that your neighbor is focusing upon. There is a sense in which all these various particular goals serve the meta-goal of greater happiness. "Greater happiness" itself is a shifting, moving target that will cash out differently from each perspective, in nearly every context we can imagine. And so we see a complex picture of ever shifting hierarchies of goals somehow hanging together and being driven by affective concerns⁵.

⁵. I believe that affect has an intimate relationship to goals in a very deep and thoroughgoing way that I am unable to explain. This relationship is at its heart a species of what is now called the hard problem.

Even if we could manage to pull all of these considerations into focus, how could we begin to evaluate competing systems of belief? One way is to attend to how we order the hierarchies.

Let's suppose our client has some basic level assumptions that she believes are universal, or at least has not considered that her significant other may not share. These should be put into the form of relative value statements, for example, "if your goal is y then you ought to endorse x." But because goals can be many and compete for our attention, it's useful to put them into a comparative matrix. Laudan recommends a formulation as follows:

(R1) If actions of a particular sort, m, have consistently promoted certain cognitive ends, e, in the past, and rival actions, n, have failed to do so, then assume that future actions following the rule "if your aim is e, you ought to do m" are more likely to promote those ends than actions based on the rule "if your aim is e, you ought to do n" (Laudan 1987 p. 25).⁶

R1 is a rule that provides a basis for ordering values on the basis of prior information that has fallen into background knowledge or belief. We can apply R1 in a counseling context with an assortment of heuristic devices.

I frequently ask clients to list the ten most important things they value or desire, first by just brainstorming - filling the list with all the things that first come to mind, then by ordering them from most important to least. Throughout this process of ordering it is important to notice whether the items mentioned in the lists are drawn upon to determine the order.

Calling attention to this sometimes reveals an incongruence between what the client merely avows and what she will act upon. This will sometimes change the order of the lists or call for adding new elements. Adjusting an allowance for the length of the list also calls values into question.

⁶. R1 is not entirely unproblematic for is this not just a special case of the general Humean problem of induction couched in instrumental terms and so flounders in precisely the same point? Others may see here an invitation to abductive inference long acknowledged by Pierce and others to be strictly speaking an unsound inferential structure.

The targets of discussion will be those that might be at issue between the client and other persons involved. Often there will already be internal tension when trying to make choices on the basis of ones list even before consideration of differences between ones own lists and those of others.

Looking for water

Another exercise calls for us to attend to actions on the basis of currently addressable information, regardless of whether the source of that information is sourced from background knowledge/belief or is sourced from newly introduced signals. Eventually, we will integrate the values listed in the first exercise with the insights realized through this second exercise. This exercise calls attention to high-level habits of valuation and reasoning styles. It can sometimes reveal an inclination to a Realist or Arealist metaphysics and how metaphysical inclination impacts behaviors. The exercise is derived from a classic information theory puzzle.

I draw a rectangle on paper and ask the client to imagine it represents a field. I draw a line from the bottom of the rectangle about 1/4 way to the top. I describe the following situation: “Imagine that you are here, at the end of this line. You are thirsty and you’ve started out across the field in the belief that there is water somewhere about. You see a tree, a large rock, and the remnants of an ancient stone wall in the field.” I ask them to describe how they proceed. Some respondents proceed randomly hoping to find water by sheer luck. Others search systematically, such as by tracing a zig zag line through each and every possible sector of the field. Still others infer the likelihood of water from cues, for example: Trees need water, so look around the tree for it’s water source. These search styles are suggestive of Intuitionist, Frequentist, Bayesian, or other alternative propensities.

No preference is given at this stage to one or another search methods. The object is to allow them to notice their search methods. What sorts of information impacts which methods they adopt and whether they are alert to the possibility that others may have reasons for adopting alternative methods based upon differing methodological or meta-methodological values. At one

level this exercise is about clear reasoning but even more importantly it is about barriers to communication⁷. Application to real world concerns of the client are to come at various points along the way. But, I find it frequently much better to proceed in the abstract until the client begins to get a full grasp of the various interconnected puzzles.

Sometimes, search methods can change by calling attention to different aspects of the puzzle. For example, methods can change if the object of search is frivolous like a napkin as apposed to something perceived to be essential for survival. Let's call an individual's subjective valuation of the object of search the force of a concept. When clients realize that the force of a concept that they are encoding in their speech acts is different than the force encoded in the speech of others the information value of the dialogue is increased.

Maslow (1954) considered a hierarchy of needs which he believed are coordinated with and are essential to personality development. The levels of Maslow's hierarchy are biological needs (food, water, shelter); safety; belongingness and love; the need to be esteemed by others; and self-actualization, the need to realize one's full potential. According to Maslow, the needs at each level must be met before one can progress to the next level. Often clients will have interest in needs named by Maslow. However, I caution against making judgements about clients based upon what needs are named. The purpose of these exercises is not to determine a particular value or set of values for the client. The purpose is to bring out the dynamic of holding and wielding those values in particular contexts; in particular the role of those dynamics in communication.

Sometimes, changes are noticed in search strategy when it's pointed out that taking steps through the field is sure to expend energy. Some subjects will then see the relationship between the value of the goal and the value of the effort expended in the search.

The quality and number of signals will also impact methods. To demonstrate this, the following is introduced to the scenario: "Having come this far you notice that there is a sign all

⁷. Both conventional communication barriers and because of the potential for incommensurability arising from these factors.

the way across the field which says, “water somewhere here.” Although the sign is quite large it is indistinct owing to it’s distance across the field or perhaps owing to the abilities of the sign maker. How does this new information affect your search?”

Supposing the subject changes search methods, or consistent with a method already in progress, now, proceeds directly towards the sign, what can be said about the impact of this type of signal? What is its value? And what reasons can be given for acting in one or another way based upon an interpretation of it’s information? What goes into such an interpretation? To help address these questions we can provide a competing signal to the left of the field, about midway across which clearly says, “Water more precisely here.” and has an arrow pointing in the general direction of the tree. The subject is positioned closer to this sign of water than to the first sign and the sign offers more information than the vague sign so far across the field. But then as the subject moves in the general direction of the second sign they unexpectedly encounter a third sign that clearly says, “water here” and in smaller print provides precise directions for finding a water pump somewhere in the field.. We can continue in this vein introducing either reinforcing or conflicting information. This induces reflection on the roots of confidence in information.

Away from personal belief structures and towards the belief structures in dialogue.

At various points in this essay I’ve talked about feelings, affect, and emotions loosely. I’ve been using different propositional attitudes interchangeably. Obviously a great deal can be said on the basis of important distinctions among these concepts that I’ve simply glossed over. But my strategy is not accidental or careless. I’m classing these together so that we can attend to commonalities they share that will form the basis of a general account of belief revision, an account that I hope will be useful for attending to information exchange between the client and others.

We can put a decision theoretic face on the process we’ve been attending to. Davidson (1973) points the way and Lewis (1974) concurs, expanding on Jeffrey’s method of finding subjective probabilities and relative desirabilities of propositions or (as in Davidson’s case)

sentences. Where we formerly worried over ‘feelings’ and ‘emotions’ as driving irrational decision, we now reinterpret these as themselves being driven by or perhaps instantiating something more general to be modeled (and thought of as a quantity or value) in the desirability axiom. Davidson begins with Jeffrey’s desirability axiom (D) changing it to apply to sentences rather than propositions. The desirability axiom (D) says that just in case there is a difference in the probability of two sentences, then the difference in an agent’s desiring what is expressed in one or the other sentence can be understood as a ratio.

This ratio is the sum of the combined subjective probability-desirability of one, $P(s)des(s)$, plus the combined subjective probability-desirability of the other, $P(t)des(t)$, over the sum of their combined probabilities.⁸

If we can solve for desirability we will on that basis be able to get insight into the propositional content of the beliefs and desires of an agent. This is supposed to be because we now have a rational decision process for determining assent to mutually exclusive sentences via truth functional sentential connectives built up from relationships between desirability and sentences logical truth even though we will not yet have a grasp of what the content of such sentences might be.⁹ “Thus . . . if two sentences are equal in desirability (and preferred to a logical truth) and their negations are also equal in desirability, the sentences must have the same probability. By the same token, if two sentences are equal in desirability (and are preferred to a logical truth), but the negation of one is preferred to the negation of the other, then the

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$$\frac{[(X(s \div t) = 0) \div (X(s \equiv t) = 0)]}{6}$$

$$des(s \equiv t) =$$

$$\frac{\{ [X(s) des(s) + X(t) des(t)] \}}{\{P(s) + X(t)\}}$$

⁹. Truth is understood in terms of disquotation and within the context of propositional attitudes and so this is not about the kind of aim towards greater Truth that worries Waller.

probability of the first is less than that of the second” (Davidson 1990 p. 328). If we hold some particular des(s) constant, then the desirability-probability of any sentence pairs (s,t) will fall into a ratio scale as specific values relative to that constant.

Lewis prescribes that we take P as the background against which to weight expected utility according to the total system of beliefs and desires we are going to ascribe. Our interest is not meant to focus merely upon individual beliefs but to provide a way of comparing clients beliefs with other conversants. So we will want to be able to outline the beliefs and desires that operate in conversation. Here is Lewis’s sketch of the situation:

... P must tell us the physics and the physical states of those things [i.e., the facts about Karl’s physical and occult properties] as well. Both Ao and Ak are to be specifications of Karl’s propositional attitudes - in particular, of Karl’s system of beliefs and desires . . . Ao specifies Karl’s beliefs and desires as expressed in our language; Ak specifies them as expressed in Karl’s language; until we find out what the sentences of Karl’s language mean, the two sorts of information are different. We take Karl’s beliefs and desires to admit of degree, with the zero and unit of desire fixed arbitrarily. Also, we allow them to vary with time. Thus, Ao and Ak will consist of ascriptions of the form:
Karl {believes, desires}, to degree d, at time t, the proposition expressed, in context c, by the sentence ‘_____’ of {our, Karl’s} language . . .

... M, the third component of our desired interpretation [sic] of Karl, is to be a specification, in our language, of the meanings of expressions of Karl’s language. Primarily, M specifies the truth conditions of full sentences of Karl’s language (perhaps relative to contexts of utterance) . . . Secondly, M specifies a way of parsing the sentences of Karl’s language, the denotation or sense or comprehension or what-not of the constituents from which sentences may be compounded, and the way that the denotation (or whatever) of a compound depends on that of its constituents. In short, it

specifies the syntactic and semantic rules of a grammar capable of generating Karl's sentences plus the truth conditions thereof (D. Lewis. 1987 , 109-110).

For Lewis P is somehow raw uninterpreted data to be presented in terms of all the possible information available to current and future physics. As counselors we will have available nothing very close to P. We will have to make do with P*. P* is simply our own current best guesses about the world and the reports of clients. We may regard our P* as a pragmatic replacement of P for our purposes. We have shaped P* in several respects.¹⁰ While, P specifies someone as a physical system, P* specifies our current best approximation to P and suggests relationships between P* and problematic concepts in a conversant's idiolect. It should be obvious however that Lewis' P is no less an interpretation than is P*. We might describe Lewis as saying that P was a god's eye interpretation based on god-theory of physics.¹¹ On the other hand since P* (to the extent that it reflects what is the case) is only our current best approximation of P, it will contain less information than P and cannot be expected to provide as nice a picture as does P. But then our purposes will be different. While Lewis is concerned to provide a picture of any possible semantic approach to radical interpretation, we are more interested in a specific example where something is really at stake. On the view I am adopting, we can say that confidence in P* admits of degrees of error to the extent that it is incomplete and to the extent that it unavoidably implicates intentions.

¹⁰. Someone might object that Lewis's P is supposed to be limited to physical evidences exhibited in what Lewis terms raw behaviors and should not admit of an agents intentions. But this requirement is one that can only be maintained in the abstract and will not be easily maintained in real world applications.

¹¹. Lewis's specification of P suggests data without the possibility of error and as such flies in the face of the usual notion of data. It is in this sense that P is interpretive. The specification of P* since it includes with it the possibility of degrees of error is, I think, closer to our usual understanding of data. It is harmless to think of P as an abstract and practically unrealizable goal. But, we often find merit in the pursuit of goals that turn out to have been unattainable.

I will adopt a version of M such that sentences are interpreted via ostension., and $T(Ao)_1$, stands for the sentence “‘This is how best to find water’ is true”¹². Lets consider s to be something like the sentence ‘Karl desires to degree n .’ Here we have a place to model a wide range of affective responses that may apply to and quantify a range of emotional drives such as feeling happier as one approaches certain goals. For the moment we have to pretend that these sentences are just squiggles. We are only interested in whether our client finds one bunch of squiggles (or mental events, vectors) more utile than another or as we have been saying more desirable than another. Actually sentences are merely placeholders for what neuro- and cognitive sciences have not yet provided - a vocabulary that picks out and names what our brains do when holding and wielding attitudes.

We can model the belief system of another in Karl’s community of language users as follows: [Anna believes $\{(Ao)=$ ‘This doesn’t lead towards water.’ is true., $(Ao)_1 =$ ‘This₁ does lead towards water’ is true., . . . $(Ao)_n\}$] where $This_n$ is replaceable by Anna’s actual methodological considerations couched in terms of R1 and is a specification of propositional attitudes - in particular, of Anna’s system of beliefs. But Lewis requires and Davidson’s principle of charity suggests that we, and Anna, should attribute these attitudes to Karl. Thus, if Karl is maximally like Anna, the specification of Anna’s beliefs mirrors Karl’s beliefs and desires as expressed in our language. But, as Lewis notes, until we know what sentences of Karl really mean such mirroring is a methodological assumption. Now let’s fill this out still further with Lewis’ account of time, context and degree of belief. Lewis licences us to ascribe beliefs to Karl as follows:

Karl {believes, desires}, to degree d , at time t , the proposition expressed, in context c , by the sentence ‘_____’ of {our, Karl’s} language where ‘_____’ is to be filled in by the indexical expressions (Ao) , $(Ao)_1$, . . . $(Ao)_n$ above.

¹². The choice of an indexical semantics here is merely one among many available to us. I want to suggest, however, that we can collapse our consideration of these expressions into the form of a variable whose range is the extension of its index. That is, once transposed into the formulation above, all that is left of the meaning of ‘_____’ is whatever there is in the world which as a matter of fact happens to correspond to that which was asserted to exist. My warrant for this is a consideration of the behavior of indexicals under causal-historical semantic theory.

If we look at the statements with which we are concerned we will notice that they are really assertions of identity between some index of 'this' and an activity kind placed within the scope of a propositional attitude matrix.

On the analysis I am advocating, counselors do not abandon the effort to find rational belief choice when the client is unable to find salient differences between their individually held beliefs to which they have access. Counselors are further constrained to help them compare the relative value of beliefs among conversants. Further, since the goal of counseling is not greater individual well being of the client, the motivation to recommend irrational-soothing beliefs over rational-but potentially disturbing ones dissolves. In fact, I do not recommend that counselors recommend a choice at all. I propose that they try to increase the client's ability to see beyond themselves to a greater horizon.

We could continue in this way to develop a theory and system of interpersonal communication that was fully relational and provided for the rational comparison of beliefs. But, the exercise would become dry and too abstract. In the end, it really is our feelings that are important, perhaps more important than rational choice. Still there seems to be some comfort in the possibility of rationality.

Does Waller's claim that belief networks are always under-determined by their emotional evidence still make sense? Waller's objection to the methods of the received view of cognitive therapy is that those methods construe rationality narrowly (with the hope that greater truth ultimately equals more satisfactory belief choices). But, "the availability of information about emotional states may well be limited....if you are not sure why you were angry, then we are confronted with virtual empirical equivalence, empirical equivalence in practice" (Waller 2001). Supposing that she is correct about the relation between emotional evidence and belief networks, the aim she attributes to traditional cognitive therapies cannot address choices among beliefs that are underdetermined.

If Waller's position on under-determination requires a correspondence sense of truth to work then, coherence and a disquotational approach to truth might block the alleged effects of

under-determination. But, her point about under-determination is independent of her point about cognitivist application of an aim toward Truth. Waller takes it that the subjective feel of considering beliefs can be considered evidence for or against those beliefs- i.e. justificatory grounds. She supposes some cognitive therapies consider this subjective feel a justification for advocating that certain beliefs are Truths. In her own system, she entertains justificatory grounds for accepting beliefs independently of their relation to truth. For Waller, the justification for advocating beliefs is, rather, how well they increase or decrease the subjective feel of considering the beliefs. Although the competing strategy under consideration relies on the coherence of beliefs rather than verisimilitude, it does embrace a concern with truth in the disquotational sense and so, it seems, fares no better with respect to under-determination.

Have we truly responded to Waller's disparagement of rationality? Waller believes that affective concerns trump concerns with rationality. In the context of explaining REBT, Waller (2001) says,

...the acceptance of one theory over another lies in that theory's ability to describe and explain new events in the client's life in a pleasing way. Rationality is generally pleasing, at least to the common western client. . . . [But] sufficient evidence for choosing between two belief systems may never be forthcoming. No matter what the client thinks, feels or experiences both belief systems have great explanatory power. If this is the case, then the key role for the counselor is to teach the client to reinterpret events as evidence for the positive belief system rather than for the negative one.

Her conclusion could only follow if, in the absence of rational decidability between belief systems, our only choice was based upon the goal of having happier clients. But, life-affirming goals of therapy need not be determined singularly on the basis of client affect. I offered an alternative goal, change in the information value of dialogues. So, in those cases where rational decidability does not fail, there was not a problem and in case rational decidability does fail, she

is obliged to tell us why the therapist should choose a course of action on the basis she proposes instead of the basis now under consideration.

We can consider some potential advantages of the new goal and procedures being put forward. One advantage is that we de-stigmatize the client. Although their neurophysiology may be concomitantly involved in the happenstance that they have a mental disorder, the individual is not disordered; the dialogues in which they are distressed are. The Davidson inspired approach, in so far as it is at all about rational choices among beliefs, relies on relative coherence and a disquotational sense of truth as a measure of rational choice. Truth is replaced by truth. This should quell Waller's concern with verisimilitude. Waller's difficulties with defining emotions disappear, too, as emotions are redefined as part of 'valuation' events using information theory.

Does this alternative goal of therapy help? This seems on its face an empirically determinable question. We could try both and compare outcomes. But, because the stated goals of our competing strategies differ, they would only be comparable in light of some agreed upon meta-methodological considerations. Reasonable persons may disagree on such meta-methodological considerations. Indeed, such disagreement is exactly what motivated Laudén to formulate R1 in the first place. This meta-methodological tension will play an important role in our consideration of threats to the alternative goals and strategies I've proposed.

Incommensurability

In preceding sections, the strategy was to change the subject. I demur consideration of whether there may be under-determination because, it turns out that in the face of the alternative strategy that I present, Waller's application of the under-determination thesis is insufficient to arrive at her conclusions. Many objections may be raised against the alternative I've proposed, for example it seems unwieldy and has no fixed standard of wellness. There is one objection that stands out that is particularly troubling.

It could be argued that the problem has simply moved from individuals to the community. If rational belief choice depends on relative valuation of conversants dialogues, what constraints are there for prescribing the favored beliefs of the community.¹³ It may be that the new proposal faces the problem of cultural relativism. If this were the end of the story, we might argue that on this point the current proposal is in agreement with the current opinion of the mental health community which holds that diagnosis of mental disorders is indeed culture bound (APA 2000).

But this threat of cultural relativism does not stop with the new proposal's consideration of clients' beliefs relative to other conversants beliefs. If what I have been saying about evaluation of dialogues relationally is correct, it also applies to the beliefs we are now considering a choice among - Waller's take on philosophical counseling and my own. I want to suggest that they are incommensurable.

Most simply, Incommensurability is captured by the slogan "having no common measure." Feyerabend (1962) and Kuhn (1962). Nearly fifty years of explication and modification of the common base found in this slogan have provided a rich tapestry of thought that is sometimes far removed from its origin. Sankey (1994) says, "to say that a pair of theories is incommensurable is to say that the theories do not share a common language, or that the terms they employ do not have common meaning. . . . The languages of competing or successive theories in the same domain may differ with respect to the meaning, and even the reference, of their terms (p. 1)." The result will be failure of intertranslatability.

It is possible that we may become unaware of how the ontology implied by each approach to counseling undergoes a change as factors motivating choices among beliefs are interpreted from within each approach. The change is from an idiom where the targets of counseling are determined and defined in relation to terms in an event ontology (movement towards goals) and abstract objects (dialogues), to an idiom where they are determined and

¹³. This is one reason why I advised against counselors recommending particular choices. We need neither philosopher nor psychologist kings

defined in relation to terms in an ontology of objects (individual clients). It may be that this transformation limits the ability to fully communicate the current position in terms relevant to Waller's interests. One way of characterizing this failure of communication is to suppose that the proposal I am putting forward is incommensurable with the standard cognitive therapies in the way most recently put forward by Kuhn (1991b.) as referring to "a sort of untranslatability, in one or another area in which two lexical taxonomies differ" (p.5). According to Kuhn, a local Incommensurability can arise when certain kind terms in one theory fail to pick out the same set as the same kind terms of its rival. In the case at issue there are two interesting areas of problematic taxonomic consistency. Underlying the taxonomic difficulties of specifying the referent of "counseling" is a disagreement on the interpretation and goal of therapy. Many have claimed that there is always, or usually, a way around incommensurability (Kuhn 1991; Sankey 1994,1997; Putnam 1990; Shapre 1979; Laudan 1996). And, as long as our attention is focused within a common domain such as semantics, for example, there is a prima fascia case for a common basis for evaluation.¹⁴ But there are certain features of cases involving multi-domains that put them beyond the reach of proposed solutions. Specifically, we sometimes find a breakdown of common methodological values, no common theory of persons, and a surfeit of common basic intrinsic value. Past solutions to incommensurability have focused upon these difficulties individually. They have noticed the problem in one or another of these domains and the solution could then be found in another. For example, if the focus is on incommensurability between ontologies of competing theories, then we might count upon a common ground of methodology for resolution. Perhaps some such solution can be found for the current debate. But, I am not confident that such a solution will be available because there is always the possibility that we will pursue different methodologies in particular cases on different competing meta-methodological grounds.

¹⁴. This does not imply that there will always be agreement on cases; only that common evaluative bases are usually drawn upon. Nor does this mean that there will always be a way to find agreement on how to decide among competing values.

This does not leave us at an impasse. Just as in comparing clients' dialogues, you don't have to find an incommensurability to help. The search itself tends to increase information and is, in this sense, therapeutic.

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