

Stage G
of A to T.

A Working Paper Draft
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SEPR No. 62

SOCIO-ENGINEERING PROBLEMS REPORT No. 62

"DISCUSSION OF THE STRUCTURE OF
ETHICAL RULES IN
THE HUMAN MIND."

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by

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Stage: G, SEP 17 SEP S-15 SEP 62 SEPR 62 Reviewed

Discussion of the Structure of Ethical Rules In the Human Mind.

Does the prevailing structure of ethics protect civilization or have the most important rules been lost in favor of less relevant rules?

Problem: Why do not the rules (ethical) people acquire in growing up cause engineers to more concerned over the social use of their work?

(a) Is it an information input overload problem? I.E., are people reducing their information input rate to stay within their channel capacity?

(b) Is it a problem of people's memory structure in respect to the external rules they absorb into their memory as conscience?*

* I am not sure of the correct definitions here, but think this may correspond closely to what the psychologists call the "super-ego."

(c) Perhaps it is a combination of both the above combined with social changes?

In a previous report a hypothesis on the transition of a growing child was developed using the concept of negative feedback borrowed from cybernetics and electronics. (See SEP no. 7, figures 2-5) Reading an article by Anna Maenchen (1) led me to revise fig. 5 to show the influence of the grandparents.. Such a revision is shown in Fig. 1 of this report.

1. Anna Maenchen, "Transmission of Human Values - The influences that give men and women the standards that they live by--" Calif. Monthly, Jan 1961, pp. 16-19.

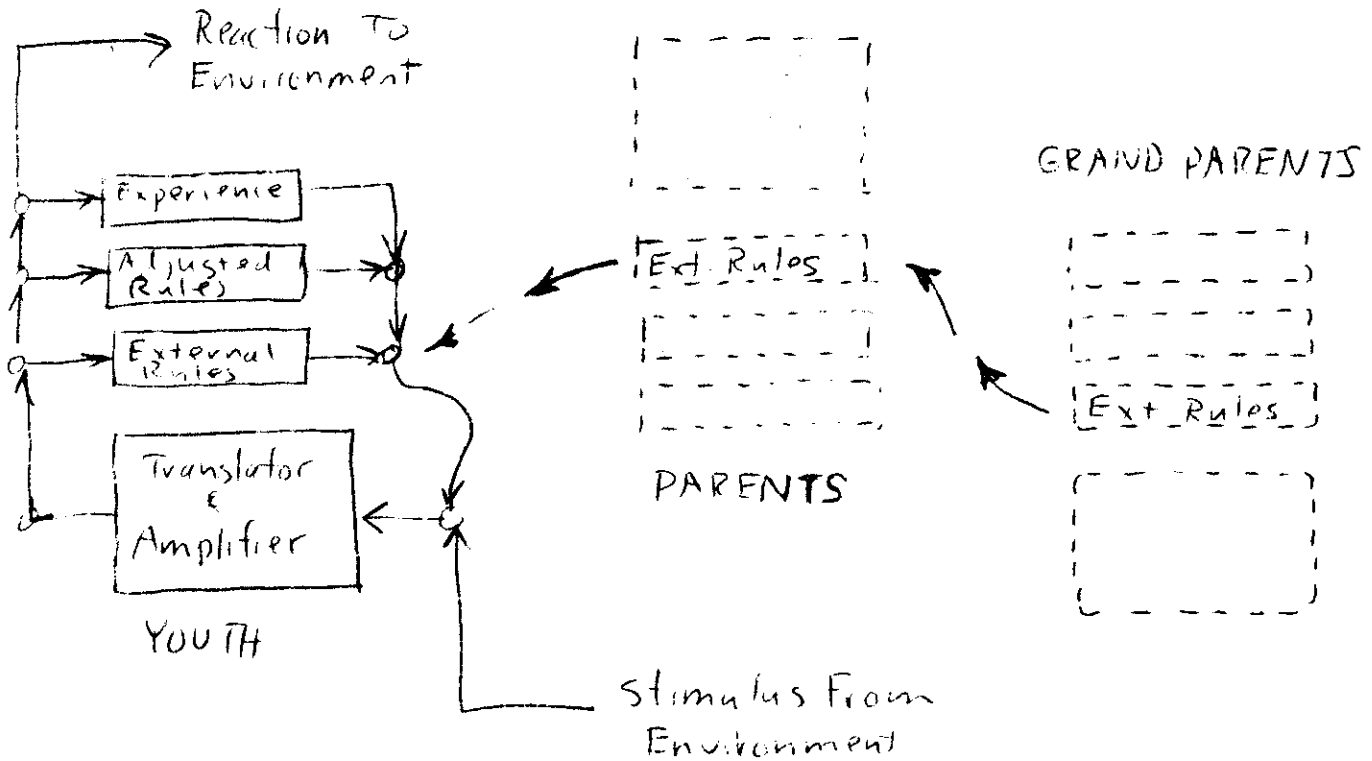


Fig 1 - Maturing Youth Becomes Partially Independent while Acquiring Some Ideas From Grandparents. (For more detailed explanation see STEP No. 7)

If we examine a hypothetical set of external rules in Fig 2 and examine how their functioning is changing as society changes, we can see the possibility that a consistent set of rules (a, b, c, d, e) put together during the first generation (i) but after society and technology have changed there may be serious conflict. The example in Fig 2 by the 5th generation rules (a, b, c) and (d, e) have internal contradictions. A 5th generation individual who tries to live up to all the rules could be destroyed or paralyzed by the conflicts.

The way many people appear to avoid the conflict and hence protect themselves is to develop logic - tight compartments as shown in Fig 3 to avoid conflict. This may save the individual from conflict, but it may promote the disintegration of society for lack of effective and valid rules.

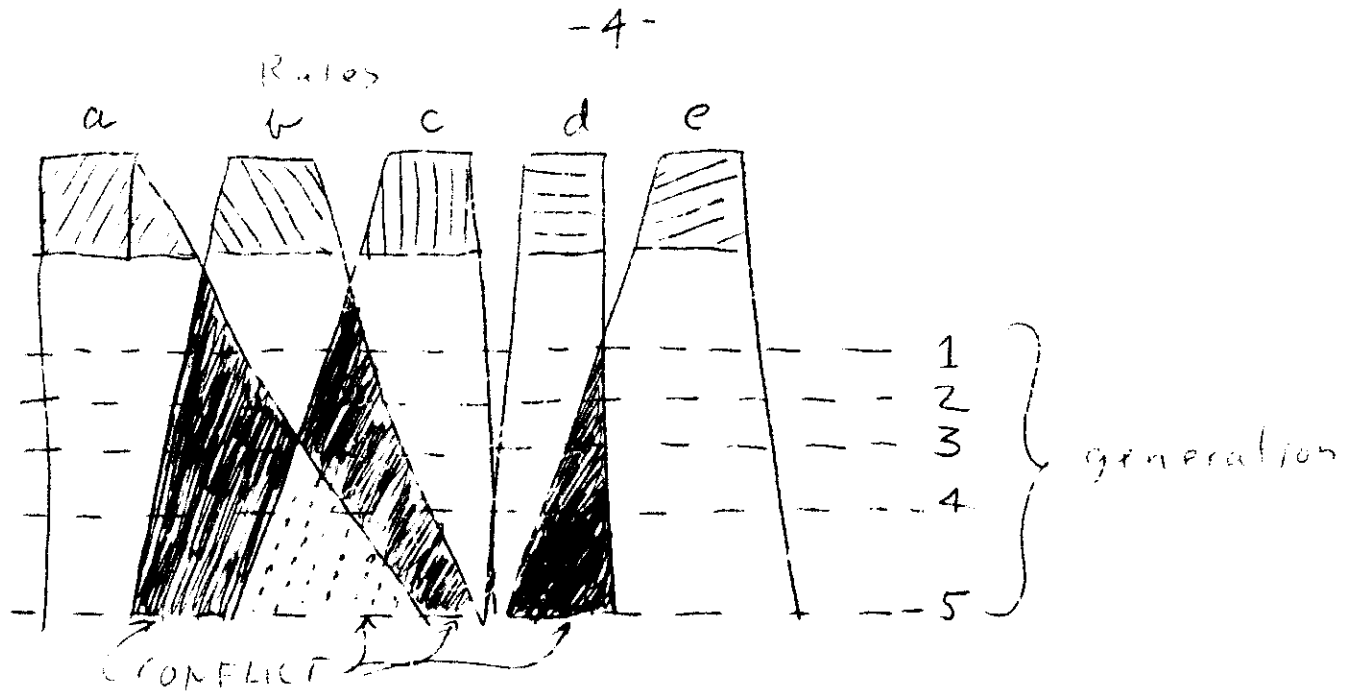


Fig 2 - Growing Conflict Between Rules with Time

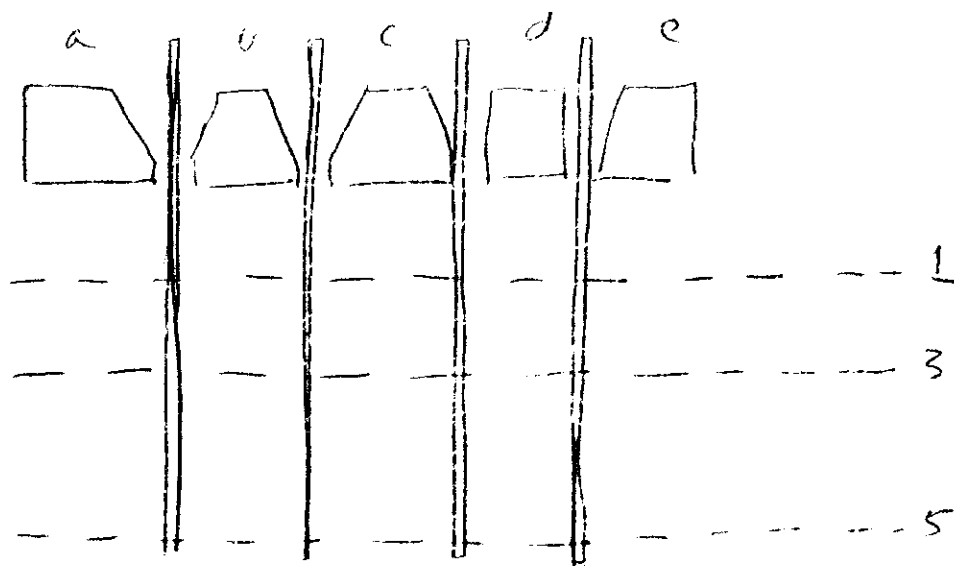


Fig 3 - Logic-Tight Comparisons.

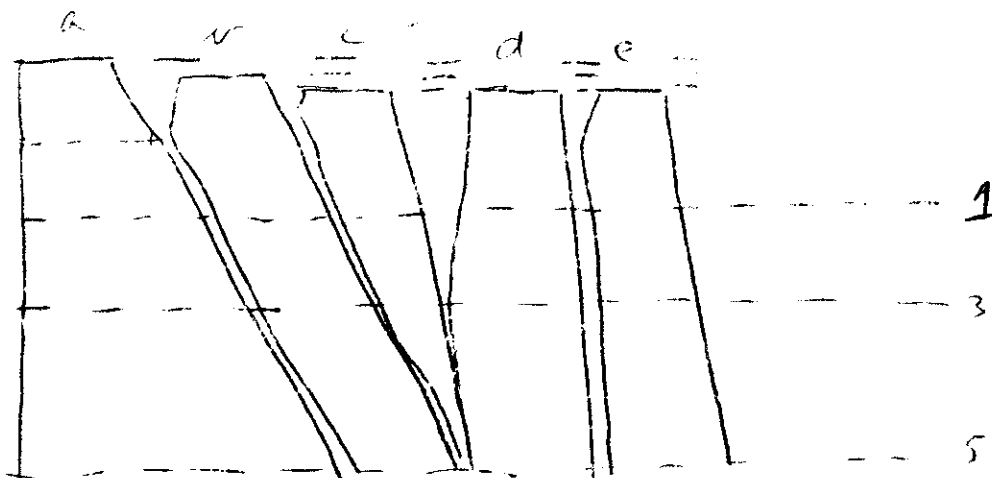
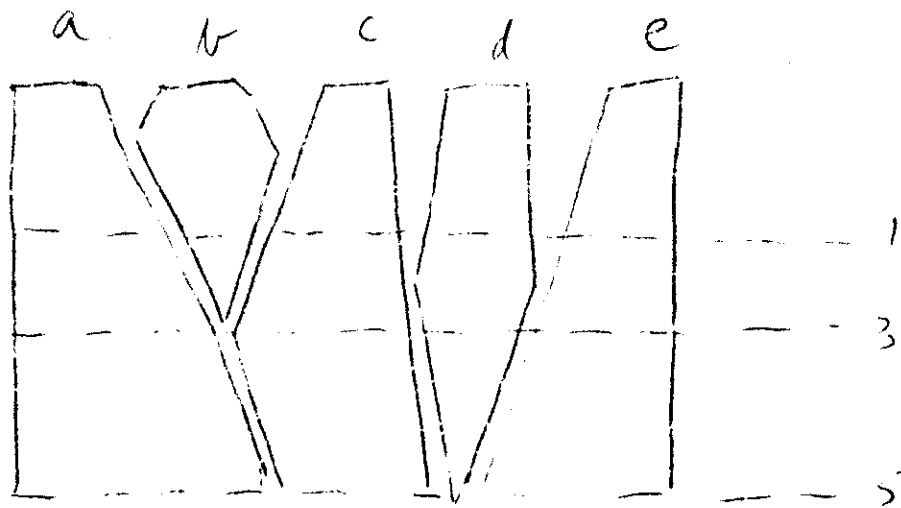


Fig 4 - Ordered Hierarchy of Rules



Figs - Eliminate of Some Rules (which might Be The Most Important for Civilization) in Favor of Those Most Socially Pleasing.

A technique more useful to society, is to modify the rules by recent experience to determine the relative priority of the rules. For example in Fig 4, if rule "a" is very basic like Albert Schweitzer's "PREFERENCE FOR LIFE," rule "a" should have precedence over other more specialized rules as is shown in Fig 4.

If an individual gives into local social pressures certain important rules such as "b" and "e" may have been pushed out by the 5th generation. If rules "b" and "e" were essential for the preservation of civilization, mankind could "ethnically" destroy itself by following rules "c" and "d" without realizing that the more important rules had been lost.

The solution to the problems of our civilization appears to lie in the understanding of ourselves and the structure of our consciences so we can re-order the rules, if necessary, to follow the important ones for the survival of mankind.

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1/19/61