

NEWS, NOTES & COMMENT

Work and play

If Stephenson's book had been easier to read, and if he, like McLuhan, had been a coiner of phrases, the commercial entertainment media might have chosen to lionize him rather than McLuhan. His play theory presents a better justification for prevailing media content than does McLuhan's global village. After once exposing oneself to this brilliantly conceived theory, one can never again ignore the importance of the play-pleasure elements in communication.

So says Wilbur Schramm in his *Men, messages, and media: A look at human communication* (Harper, 1973, pp. 26-27). He is referring to William Stephenson's *The play theory of mass communication* (Chicago, 1967), but after rendering a fairly accurate summary of Stephenson's main thesis, Schramm goes on to characterize it as a "single-factor approach" and as a "useful, but partial, theory" which draws too sharp a distinction between work and play, but which "pays less attention than we might wish to interpersonal communication or to the use of media for such tool purposes as instruction." In short (Schramm seems to be complaining), Stephenson's play theory gives too little attention to work!

A sharp distinction is indeed made between social control and convergent selectivity, but this conceptual sharpness in no way denies that play and work intermingle at the level of everyday behavior. Schramm seems to think Stephenson has gone too far, and that the ludenic character, like Tennyson's lotus-eater, will free himself from control and responsibility and "withdraw into the land of play." But play is not autistic escape or catharsis, as Stephenson went out of his way to emphasize, and it's hard to take seriously the claim that play has been overly emphasized given the paucity of studies focusing on it, both before and after the publication of *Play theory*. It is more likely, as Stephenson suggested, that inner-directed social scientists (such as the Schramms, Riesmans, and Marcuses) find ludenic

elements of culture distasteful, and prefer to think of the media in terms of communication pain, e.g., in terms of "the use of media for such tool purposes as instruction." But even in this view, one might suspect, there is much that is playful.

In quest of subjectivity

Of special interest is a paper by a social and applied behaviorist (sub specie *Skinnerian extremis*), Montrose M. Wolf, "Social validity: The case for subjective measurement, or How applied behavior analysis is finding its heart," *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, 1978, 11, 203-214. Watson and Skinner eschewed subjective measurement based on verbal report, Wolf says, in an effort to avoid hypothetical internal variables, but their intellectual progeny blindly followed suit in opposition to subjectivity per se; however, a "new consensus" is emerging: "It seems that if we aspire to social importance, then we must develop systems that allow our consumers to provide us feedback about how our applications relate to their values, to their reinforcers." The problem is one of method. Unfortunately, Wolf feels compelled in his search to embrace such R-methodological concepts as validity, and such devices as opinion polls which, as he is likely to discover, often lead to a reintroduction of the very internal states from which operant behaviorism has endeavored to escape.

Equally important is a paper by Austrian psychoanalysts Bernhard Mitterauer & Werner F. Pritz, "The concept of the self: A theory of self-observation," *International Review of Psycho-Analysis*, 1978, 5, 179-188, who acknowledge the necessity of a theory of communication "based on a purely 'connative language'," but who ultimately alchemize communicability so that it will fit the a priori categories of psychoanalysis. Consequently, "...our self-concept is based on a reformulation of ego structures as self-referential processes." But it is a step in the right direction nonetheless.

During the past 75 years, both subjectivity and the self have suffered a bi-directional reductionism --as operant response consequences shaped by environ-

mental contingencies of reinforcement (behaviorism), and as manifestations of internal psychic states and mechanisms (psychoanalysis). It will be worthwhile monitoring the movement of these two great psychologies as they gravitate toward the position of operant subjectivity, which would provide a palliative, if not a panacea, for them both.

QUANAL Users' Guide

Description of a FORTRAN IV computer program containing options for manipulation of Q-sort data, including correlation, principal components factoring, orthogonal or oblique rotation to simple structure, and the calculation of factor scores. Available at \$3 so long as present stock lasts, from G. Norman Van Tubergen, Department of Human Communication, University of Kentucky, Lexington 40506.

Recent Q application

James A. McCain (African and Afro-American Studies, SUNY Brockport), "Perceptions of socialism in post-socialist Ghana: An experimental analysis," African Studies Association, Baltimore, Nov. 1978. For a related study, see McCain "Ideology in Africa," *African Studies Review*, 1975.