APPLICATIONS OF COMMUNICATION THEORY: IV. IMMEDIATE EXPERIENCE OF MOVIES

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I

This is the fourth of a set of papers which has as its purpose to broaden the base of the theory described earlier (Stephenson, 1969). The theory is to the effect that communication between people (or within a person's own mind, as when we say he talks to himself) is characteristically subjective, that is, concerned with matters of opinion. Information theory, contrariwise, concerns matters of fact.

With respect to movies there is, of course, a great deal of communication so regarded. One would scarcely think so, however, to judge by the dearth of studies on the matter. Much is said by critics, psychologists, psychoanalysts, and sociologists about what movies are about and what purposes they serve. It used to be said that movies were merely for amusement--avenues of escape or distraction--which many decried, but which some wished to value for its own sake (Riesman, 1954). Escapism, however, is no longer a popular topic: Many present-day movies are now said to be confrontations with problems, controversies, and morals. Movies now treat homosexuality (*Reflections in a Golden Eye*), racial hatred (*In the Heat of the Night*), marital discord (*Two for the*

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Road), youthful sexual fantasies (*The Graduate*), the mindless daily violence of much in American life (*Bonnie and Clyde*), and so on--all with increasing visual sophistication. Moral traditions are being questioned, the critics now tell us, and myths are being "debunked." For the new directors, for example Jean-Luc Godard, movies are entirely new experiences, in line with McLuhan's dictum that "the medium is the message."

In all of this, however, the immediate experience of the movie-goer remains unexamined. When it is said that a movie deals with homosexuality (*Reflections in a Golden Eye*) it is verifiable, as a matter of fact: But whether the movie-goer experiences it as homosexuality is at least questionable--and indeed it may turn out to be a matter of opinion for him. The psychologist, psychoanalyst, sociologist, and the film critic do not examine movie-goers' experiences. They will say, of course, that they examine their *own* experiences, but it has been pointed out before that it is an *individual* who goes to the movies, not the psychologist, sociologist, or critic *in him*. The psychologist, sociologist, or critic seeks to "explain" a movie--for example as projections of oneself as hero (Freud, 1925), or as cultural myth (Wolfenstein & Leites, 1950), or as a way to learn facts (Hovland et al., 1949). David and Evelyn Riesman (1954), with a friendly eye for "Hollywood hallucinations," nevertheless looked for "ways in which different audiences shape their experiences of the movies *in terms of their character structures and daily-life situations*" (Riesman, 1954, italics added). I add the italics to make the point that the *sociologist's* standpoint is at issue, not the individual's own as such. It was a film critic, however, Robert Warshow, who called for the rejection of all such a prioristic speculation and "explanation," and for an examination instead of what is the immediate experience of movie-goers:

> ... it must be [he wrote] that I go to the movies for the same reason that the "others" go: because

> I am attracted to Humphrey Bogart or Shelly Winters or Greta Garbo; because I require the absorbing immediacy of the screen; because in some way I take all that nonsense seriously. For I must make one more confession: I have seen a great many bad movies, and I know when a movie is bad, but I have rarely been bored at the movies; and when I have been bored, it has usually been at a "good" movie (Warshow, 1962: 28).

Warshow's are also our own premises: We start with an individual's immediate experience. But science has to be made of it. By immediate experience we mean what is subjective to the person; and by this, in the final analysis, we mean his opinions about a matter (Stephenson, 1968), which, as it happens, he can, may, or does make conversations about --either with others, or with himself (in his fantasy and the like) (Stephenson, 1969). Thus, about *Bonnie and Clyde*, in its hey-day, discussions were widespread in streets, over meals, in the "news," in classrooms, etc. All were attitudinal--the young needing to have the support of his peers, perhaps, and assuming a sophistication with a minimum of fact to support it, but plenty of opinion; the old reflecting on its mindless violence; the vicar opining about the reversal of values it foretold; the knowledgeable professor digressing on the subject of male impotency, and so on. Our concern, in communication theory, is with all such matters, and all are essentially matters of opinion, highly subjective, that somehow *matter* to the person.

Also, like Warshow, we are suspicious of any intrusion of speculation, from psychologist, critic, or sociologist, that comes between the movie and its viewer. A beginning has to be made somehow, however, and a theory of some kind is essential. For this I have proposed propositions which are fundamental to all "scientific information" (MacKay, 1969). Anyone who cares to read MacKay's paper, entitled "Quantal Aspects of Information" (1950), will see that his approach and mine put forward in Q methodology stem

from the same Fisherian roots. His *logon* is my factorial balanced designing (Stephenson, 1953); his *metron* is the factorist's use of *standard scores*, which, in Q methodology, is the same unit for every Q sort ever performed, thus solving, with one definition, the *fundamental* problem of measurement in the field of "meaning."

But the logic goes deeper. MacKay (1969) represents "meaning" as a matter of selection, using for the purpose a concept of "preconcerned possibilities." This is what older psychologists (like myself) used to discuss as *apperception*, and which younger ones now propound as *pre-selection* in perception (and the like). MacKay postulates each possibility as a vector, with a quantity attached (m), as orthogonal axes in multidimensional space. The total information content (logon and metron) is then the vector sum of the innumerable vector components ($m_1+m_2+...$). This, of course, is precisely what is postulated in factor analytical theory. All of this, which is fundamental not only to information theory (Shannon, 1948), to Gabor's (1946) theory of communication, and to Fisher's (1930) variance analysis, is no less so to MacKay's (1969) views on "meaning," and to the theory of human communication adumbrated in the paper with which this series began (Stephenson, 1969).

It is also the basis, of course, of classical factor analysis, as discussed for example by Burt (1940: 222), in which two profound principles were assumed. One, the principle of "atomic unity," is this self-same domain of innumerable vectors in multidimensional space. The other is an article of faith--the principle of "limited independent variety" --namely, the belief that somehow there is order in this space, which the factorist conceived as *factors* ("of the mind"). What was always implicit in the principle, but never made sufficiently explicit until recently, is the idea that such factors may be *operants* (Stephenson, 1977), that is, sub-totals which naturally exist, and which have to be *elicited*. They are elicited by technique, in our case by Q

technique, but are in no way dependent on a priori theory as to their possible meaning.

I mention all of this to make explicit upon what grounds my own theory of communication stands. It is the same, in space conceptual respects, as any of those mentioned above, but as factor analysis preceeded the Shannons, Fishers, Gabors, and MacKays in this conceptualization, so also it has not been remiss in fostering genuine *measurement*.[1] Where a MacKay can only speculate on the meaning of a question (like "is it raining?"), I can bring measurement into it, as a subsequent paper in this series will show. For the moment, however, this long preamble bears on one matter of significance: it explains in part why I agree with the film critic, Warshow, in rejecting psychological, sociological, and psychoanalytic or the like explanations (which one then proves to one's satisfaction), and why I put in their place the eliciting of operant factors from the immediate experiences of people who have looked (in this case) at a movie.

II

Thus, the mass of opinion about a movie--consisting of what viewers can say or may say, or do say, write, or the like about it as matters of opinion--is in our communication theory represented by vectors in multidimensional space. It is conceived as a domain of "atomic uniformity," out of which, by way of operant factors, a few "independent varieties" may be found. Burt called these metaphysical; MacKay calls it, instead, quantum theory.

The procedures as far as Q method is concerned

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[1]I mean as distinct from purely a prioristic categorical procedures such as Osgood's (1957) work illustrates. A Q sort is not a measurement of *anything*: It models, one hopes, a complex sub-total of information in the above theoretical sense.

are now well known. Individuals, upon viewing a movie, are called upon to converse or write about it, that is, to say what they care about it, as they might in everyday conversation. They do not *judge* it, as good or bad necessarily, but retrospectively enter into communication--i.e., by attitudinizing--about it. One may add what they or others have written about the movie. From the body of communication so reported one separates statements of opinion from those of fact, and the former constitute a Q population from which a Q sample is drawn (or composed, as the case may be). With this any subject, by a Q sort, may model his own subjectivity about the movie. The Q sorts, duly factored, provide evidence of "independent varieties" in the subjectivity at issue.

The explanation of such factors is another matter, reaching into the necessity for theories of a different order, which, with Merton (1957), may well be called "theories of the middle range," and which open the doors to the countless hypotheses put forward by psychologists, critics, sociologists and the rest, none of which is self-sufficient.

III

To illustrate the application, a study was made with a 30-minute color movie produced for the American Cancer Society, entitled "The Million Club." It runs for thirty minutes and as it can be hired without charge it commends itself for research purposes. It is a production with many features of the newer movies--the story is a pretext for a message about the dire effects of not attending to early warning signs of cancer; the movie is a confrontation, an approach to terrifying possibilities for all of us.

In the story seven persons are invited to a dinner party by a Mr. X, none knowing each other or the mysterious host. At the dinner a place is set for Mr. X, but he is absent. The seven guests realize that each, five years earlier, had a successful op-

eration for cancer: Each in turn, in flashbacks, describes his or her brush with cancer. Was Mr. X less fortunate? He turns out to be Ralph Edwards, a television star (at the time) who appears at the end to say that he too had cancer five years ago. He wished to celebrate, in this way, his and their entry into the club of a million others as fortunate as themselves. The movie is expertly produced, with a cast of well-known actors and actresses.[2] There are a few didactic patches, as becomes an informational production, but the movie maintains itself substantially as a story, with elements of suspense and moments of intense feeling (as when a woman has to confront her husband with the fact that she has to have a breast removed). The suspense is lessened halfway through the movie when the purpose of the dinner party is apparent: But the subsequent playbacks, in which each guest recounts his or her experience, are absorbing, and at times intensely so. The end is a let-down, but from several showings it can be said that the movie is a substantial one, qua movies.

For purposes of the present study, sixty senior college students were shown the movie in a theater, in one group. There were 26 women and 34 men students, ranging in age from 20 to 23, median 21 years. They entered into it as they would do for any movie: They were informed, however, that they would "tell it as it was," as far as they could, subsequently, in writing.

The result is sixty reports, ranging in length from 100 to 1000 words. The subjects had been informed that the experiment was not a test of memory; nor of introspection; nor of critical judgment; nor of writing ability. The interest was in the ideas

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[2]The film was produced as a gift of Mr. Elmer Bobst, Life Member of the American Cancer Society Board. The cast includes Francesca Bellini, Grandon Rhodes, Bill Quinn, Josephine Hutchinson, Allen Jenkins, Harlen Warde, and Ralph Edwards.

and feelings experienced during the viewing, naively regarded and directly reported.

The present author read the reports and abstracted from them the many statements of opinion they expressed, eventuating in a sample of 36 statements, all self-referent, and all matters of opinion.[3] Two days after the showing, the 36 statements were given back to the same sixty subjects, with an instruction to perform a Q sort to represent, as far as they could, the report they had previously written. All apparently found this easy to do. In any event, fifty-nine Q sorts were correlated and factor analyzed, for a centroid, followed by a varimax solution.

Three factors were indicated, in passable simple structure, 27 variables (Q sorts) for factor A, 10 for factor B, and 9 for factor C. That is, 46 of the 59 variables are covered by the three factors at acceptable levels of significance. Factor A is bipolar, 5 of its variables having negative loadings: Diametrically opposed positions are therefore represented on this factor.

IV

The three factors have to be interpreted. I need scarcely give the reminder that this is a complicated matter. The factor-scores have the logical status of tested hypotheses--once we know what the hypotheses are--each statement of opinion having a factor score. Interpretation is a matter of fitting the meanings of these statements, with their scores, into an overall explanation for the factor, not only internally to the factor, but across in its relationships with the

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[3]Much in the reports, of course, was specific to a student, as when one recalled "feeling homesick for a letter from home" (the movie opens with shots of engraved letters-of-invitation being posted to, and received with curiosity by, each of the characters in the story). Such are matters of fact, not of opinion, for the purposes in hand.

other factors. It is easy to conclude, in this way, that many psychological principles apply to the factors--that the students *identify with* the film (differentially, since there are three factors and not just one); that if one reacts defensively, *distortions* in perception occur; that *cognitive dissonance* is evident...and so on. All such, however, are of secondary interest and indeed none becomes evident until a factor is identified. The factor comes first. These "middle-range" principles follow; they may be necessary, but not sufficient to explanation.

The important thing, beginning with the factor, is the *expectancy* of the viewer, that is, what kind of a movie is it that he, so to speak, is *wanting* to see. The profound principle is the *apperceptive* one: Each person comes into the movie-viewing situation with a mind atuned to certain expectancies, which relate mainly to *opinions*. No one describes this better than the film critic Renata Adler:

> There is probably no more unedifying and, in many ways valueless kind of communication than everyone's always expressing opinions about everything. Not ideas, or feelings, or information--but opinions, which amount to little more than a long, unsubstantiated yes or no on every issue. People begin to identify themselves by opinion-clusters: on the basis of a few simple questions...Did you like *Bonnie and Clyde*?...you can project whole personalities...and social groups. (Adler, 1969: 82)

Except that I broaden the conception of opinion to mean not merely *pro* or *con* an issue, but to include ideas (of opinion), and feelings (of opinion), but not information (as facts), this highly perceptive paragraph fits our case very well. The communication is indeed apt to be "unedifying," "valueless"--all communication-pleasure is so qualified; people do identify themselves by clusters--they are the operant factors of our studies.

It is indeed true that film reviews are read with regard to these opinions: The reader likes to see his own opinions supported by the critic's. I would agree, however, that the critic has a function, not merely to sense what movie-goers expect but to recognize an exceptional film when it comes along and to keep it before the public mind until it catches up with it. Conversely, the critic can help the viewer to steer clear of vulgarity, to become more discerning and the like--but all again as a matter of opinion.

With the above in mind, then, let us interpret the three factors, not for the psychological, sociological, or medical-educational implications, but for their opinion-expectancies.

V

As I indicated in a previous paper (Stephenson, 1969), the factors are merely indications of the conversational capabilities of the individuals, and it is one's rule, always, to go back to the individuals to engage them in further conversation about the matters in hand, or to ask them to write about the matters. One validates the "opinion-clusters" this way: The factors merely point the way as rough-and-ready models.

Even so, they are complex. Their internal logic doesn't come far short in logical respects of the reasoning used by chemists when they explain the mechanisms involved, for example, in the genetic code.[4]

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[4]Singer (1968: 1235) gives an account of the work of the 1968 Nobel Laureates Holley, Khorana, and Nirenberg which runs on for 70 column inches of tested hypotheses, in the following form: "The active nucleic acid was not DNA, but the chemically related nucleic acid, RNA.... Most surprisingly, however, natural RNA containing the four common ribonucleotides (adenylic (A), uridylic (U), cytidylic (C), and guarrylic (G) acids) was not necessary in Nirenberg's

Here I can merely offer a "feel" for the complexities. One will notice in the following brief accounts that some reference is made to "middle-range" psychological principles, but that the opinion-expectancies prevail.

Overall, my conclusion was that factor A reflected an "opinion-cluster" such as Renata Adler had described--on one and the same bipolar factor, *pro* at the positive end, and *con* at the negative. The students on factor B thought that the film was a detective story, and cancer was incidental to the mystery of Mr. X's whereabouts: The film, for them, was a "put-on," and a "let-down." Three students on factor C had been treated for one form or other of cancer: The factor therefore represented a deadly serious concern about cancer. Thus three quite different audiences are indicated, each with its own expectations.

With this broad overview in mind one can take any statements of the Q sample, with the factor scores they have, and argue that they make good sense--provided some theories of "middle-range" are introduced to help out. Here, for example, are some statements which are sharply discriminative for factor A (with scores to the right for factors A, B, and C respectively):[5]

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cell-free system. An RNA-like polyribonucleotide containing only one of the ribonucleotides, uridylic acid, was extremely active. Furthermore, polyuridylic acid stimulated the incorporation of only one of the twenty possible amino acids, namely pherylalamine ...," and on and on, for hundreds of such facts, all necessary to an understanding of the chemistry of the genetic code. The complexities for our factors are small fry compared with such undertakings, but they are real, nevertheless.

[5]A difference of 2 (integers) is highly significant statistically, either across from one factor to another, or down one factor. Factor A is bipolar, and is reported from its positive pole; the negative

33. Life is precious, and the thought of death--for myself or my family--frightened me.	4	1	-1
34. A sudden tinge of fear for myself.	4	2	1
16. If cancer can strike so many people, in so many different ways, it could strike me, too.	4	0	3
23. The film was really effective--it made me feel seriously.	3	-4	0
27. Felt sympathy; happy for them because they were cured.	3	-2	3
22. In spite of the corn, I found myself empathizing with each person as his tale was told.	3	1	4
14. It accomplished its purpose without overly frightening or nauseating anyone.	2	-3	2

Note how little factor B "enjoyed" the film; also how factor A dramatizes the fear, the thought of death--but as cliches, to judge by the significantly *lower* score they give to statement 14. Note how circumspect factor C--the film *wasn't* really effective, or else couldn't make them feel more serious than they felt already (statement 23, score 0 compared with +3 and -4 on factors A and B respectively). Note how factor B seems quite oblivious to the threat of cancer (statement 16, score 0). About every statement one can make such assertions in line with the overall interpretation.

In subsequent discussion with the students on factor A, as well as from re-reading the notes they themselves had written about the film, it is evident

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standpoint of the factor (-A) will be reported below.

that the factor had subsumed an "opinion-cluster" of a characteristic communication-pleasure type. The film set the students questioning--but that was all. Should they quit smoking? Might they contact cancer? Would they be alive to see their children grow up? When did they last have a check-up? Cancer, surely, is a horrible way to die. Are any of my own moles malignant? Mother had a breast operation--perhaps I should resolve to exercise more and smoke less. Might I get skin cancer from the sunbathing I did in Florida? It must be terrible to be a woman and face losing a breast.

The students loaded negatively on this same factor (-A) had the same to say, in their reports, about resolving to ease up on smoking, or "feeling good" because they had never smoked, or wishing that their parents or fiances wouldn't smoke or would have medical check-ups. But they threw every manner of invective at the characters and the film: The old lady with breast cancer was an "old bag," "fruit," "arsenic," "artificial." "With breasts like hers," one said, "no one would notice." The film, they said, was an insult to their intelligence; it was trying to scare people, and they resented this; and why should we be reminded of cancer, why throw it at our faces? Here are some statements which discriminate factor -A from the other factors (scores for -A, B, and C):

8. It insults my intelligence.	4	4	1
1. It was trying to scare me into doing things--which I resent.	4	-1	-3
11. Why think about sadness, and terrifying situations when they don't exist for me?	4	0	-3
20. Illness, poverty, cancer are all around us, but why try to make it closer, and throw it in our faces?	3	-3	-4
12. What a bunch of propaganda!	3	0	-2

32. My thoughts seem trivial--what possible meaning could be gotten from them?	2	0	-4
9. It might create a lot of hypochondriacs.	2	-3	0

Note again how precisely the hypotheses implied by the overall interpretation are supported by these factor scores. That the film "insults my intelligence" in the case of factor A is the *con* of the opinion-cluster; but in the case of factor B it is because the film had been a "let-down." The *serious* impact of factor C is indicated at statement 32: There is nothing trivial about matters if one has had a bout with cancer (score -4). And how could a stupid film like this make anyone (like *me*, of factor B) hypochondriacal? (statement 9).

Factor A is merely a hint of the conversational capabilities of most students (nearly 50% of whom are on factor A) about cancer. All "got the message." If they smoked they knew the dangers, and said they harbored fears of cancer, "though not enough to induce me to give up the habit." Why do I smoke ... it's stupid? What would our baby do if I died from cancer? What a bunch of propaganda ... but I really ought to stop smoking ... this is the mass-of-opinion to which the factor calls attention. *Relative to factor C it is "all talk."* It is easy to argue that the *negative* pole of the factor is a defensive reaction--this would be a hypothesis of "middle-range." The students negative on the factor turn the factor, so to speak, upside down, statement for statement of the Q sample: It is as though they *knew* that the Q sort should be the other way around, but *they* were going to be negative about it, out of spite or affrontation. Even so, to say that the *con* is a defensive reaction is to miss the main possibility that "mere" matters of opinion are at issue, with ramifications into all sorts of "middle range" explanations.

A "middle range" hypothesis is well illustrated

for factor C. Almost everyone is prepared to say that "cancer is terrible." In the case of the students on factors A and B several make mention of parents, relatives, or friends who have died, or are dying, of cancer: But there is no "press"--it is not a source of ever-ready anxiety for them. In the case of factor C it is otherwise: The indications are of pressing concern, of active, present involvement very near the surface of the mind, and with good reason. There are actual lumps on the breast, polyps in the colon, or part of a lung already removed because of cancer, for some of the students on this factor.

Some discriminating statements for factor C are as follows (scores for +A, B, and C):

22. In spite of the corn, I found myself empathizing with each person as his tale was told.	3	1	4
19. I felt some worry.	3	3	4
31. The basic message got across, even if the film wasn't much to watch.	2	3	4
27. Felt sympathy; happy for them because they were cured.	3	-2	3
18. The main theme for me was "fear of not knowing."	1	1	3
16. If cancer can strike so many people, in so many different ways, it could strike me, too.	4	0	3
13. It caught me at one point--it *did* almost make me cry.	0	-4	2

The empathy, worry, identification with, and sympathy for the cured, etc., are evident feelings for factor C. Most significant, perhaps, is the impact of statement 18: "Fear of not knowing" really hurts C, but

not A or B (the scores are +1, +1, +3 for factors A to C respectively).

Again the reports written by the students of factor C qualify this with rich detail of compassion, the concern for one's fiancee or parents, and the need for everyone to quit smoking. Was one's wife in the same situation? "I have been tested every four months for the lumps in my breasts...my mother's were malignant, my sister's were not. The subject is one about which I don't think often, and try to pass over completely...I have a nervous stomach and the thought of cancer really upsets me." "I am worried about cancer of the breast." "I was moved almost to tears by the scene (of the wife having to tell her husband of her coming breast removal)." "Poor woman. I remember when I thought I had breast cancer. Of course I was dumb to think it. But I can see why she (the actress) is crying." "Oh God! They're lucky to be alive...what a sickening operation." "Thank God I don't smoke...it's not easy to stop."

One need say little more: The individuals on factor C are deeply involved emotionally in the threat of cancer, for good reasons.

Factor B was neither *pro* nor *con* (the common opinion-cluster of factor A) but discursive in a different manner. They had been "taken in" by the film; they expected a mystery story. Was Mr. X a millionaire, they thought, who had died of cancer, who had selected these people to give them his millions so that everyone could live happily ever after? After such expectancies the ending was a total let-down. One of the students on this factor put the matter this way: "Although the movie was serious in nature, and probably effective if it reached the right audience, I wasn't moved by the pathos of the situation. Many scenes brought me close to laughter--not because of the way it was presented, but because of my state of mind"--"it was a story badly told." Here are some of the statements which gave point to factor B:

8. It insults my intelligence.	-4	4	-1
10. What a stupid ending!	-3	4	3
30. It made an impression--more a feeling of concern for my parents than for myself.	2	4	-3
15. It led me to be thankful that I'm strong and healthy.	1	3	1

These begin the process of *critical regard*, not opinion *pro* or *con*: It insults one's intelligence (8); what a stupid ending (10)--even factor C thought so, but for different reasons; "it made an impression" (30), but entirely in the cliche sense--one can always say one is concerned for one's parents, at least, in a situation like this. After all, one is healthy (15). The following statements, which score highly *negatively* for B, keep the above interpretation well in line:

14. It accomplished its purpose without overly frightening or nauseating anyone.	2	-3	2
13. It caught me at one point--it *did* almost make me cry.	0	-4	2
23. The film was really effective --it made me feel seriously.	3	-4	0
4. I don't get it...there must be a million views on this film.	-2	-4	-1

The students were inclined to *laugh*, not to cry (13); it nauseated (14); it was wholly ineffective (23); and there's only *one* view on the film (4)--it's a letdown, a put-on, a film that no doubt might be effective with some other audiences, "but not with us."

VI

There is, I submit, an astonishing precision about such factors whose interpretation, as we see, is almost as complicated as explaining the chemical mechanisms in the genetic code. No single person could argue in this manner about a movie he has seen, except the film critic. Yet it is with just such reflections that the film-goer is involved, highly condensed in the case of a factor, but of the same coinage. How indeed does one experience a movie? We can turn to a critic for an answer: Jacob Brackman (1968) reminds us that if we stopped to reflect on a film as we looked at it, we would miss the ongoing action. We experience the film first, and then retrospect upon it afterwards; we re-wind the film "in our minds" and look again at what interested us; we pause to take stock on this or that part of it and savor the most enjoyable frames. "Films," Brackman writes, "mellow in leisurely retrospection." A film such as *The Graduate*, he remarks, was a "cultural phenomenon" --it was discussed in gatherings across the length and breadth of America, crossing boundaries of class, age, and race. It satisfied both major film publics --the "undiscerning" as well as the "demanding." *The Graduate* remains as a monument to American film making--the biggest success in the history of films up to that time, grossing more than *Sound of Music*.

Even so, our study of the very modest *The Million Club* has much to say that is pertinent to any understanding of a film like *The Graduate*. We still have much to do to enlarge our knowledge of commercial movies from our theoretical standpoint but the indications are that, quite generally, they give rise to factors like A and B for *The Million Club, in which nothing really matters very much*. The factors are reflections of *talk*, such as one would have at any gathering, with no one much the wiser afterwards, but all alike re-affirming a broad cultural spectrum of opinion--the "cultural phenomenon" of Brackman's essay. Every now and then a film digs a little deeper, as *The Million Club* did for factor C. In this case

something *really* matters--a matter, for example, of life or death. Deep values, and profound human feelings of anguish, torment and the like are at issue.

The problem arises, indeed, how far any commercial films dig so deeply, and whether that is what one should expect of them. It was Warshow (1962), again, who remarked that the principal role of mass culture is to "maintain public morale," or as I put it (Stephenson, 1967) to maintain the *status quo*: "At a time," Warshow writes, "when the normal condition of the citizen is a state of anxiety, euphoria spreads over our culture like the broad smile of an idiot." The commercial film is that benign idiot, doing little good and little harm in relation to any deeper values. This is well illustrated, in fact, by Brackman's critical regard of *The Graduate*. Forgetful of Warshow's admonitions, Brackman looks at *The Graduate* with a social theorist's eyes, bent on representing, somehow, the deepest torment and anguish of young Americans. He is critical of the film for not exploring the "terrible tension" with which many of the best of our young people experience their relation to America. *The Graduate*, instead, is merely fun to watch. Young love, in it, is triumphant! The pure Elaine gets her man! This is how young people fall in love in movies...it doesn't have to make sense. The villain is indeed consummately villainous! The hero, the graduate, is indeed heroic!

The facts are that *The Graduate*, precisely because of its "fun," its gaucherie, its reiteration of a *status quo* position (nearer to the Eisenhower ideal than the present disallusionment), was one of the biggest successes in the history of movies.

This is not to say that a movie couldn't be produced which might, instead, depict the anguish of some of our young. *Bonnie and Clyde*, for example, gave some hints in that direction, suggesting more about our present lives than most films: But it, like *Oedipus Rex* or *Hamlet*, is not set in contemporary life--we are protected from the hopelessness of Bonnie

and Clyde, as from the anguish of Oedipus and the torments of Hamlet, by historical settings: They lived in "bad times," so we can bear the pains.

The implications for "educational" films are no less significant. *The Million Club* has a deepening effect only on people who have cancer already, or fear it, as a "press;" and this can be alarming rather than preventive or educative. Studies with housewives, indeed, point in this direction: The film is frightening, anxiety-arousing, rather than the reverse precisely where it is more effective as "theatre." Factors like A and B, however, are indications that the matter of cancer has its "opinion-clusters," and it is on the basis of these that courses of action have to be directed. In this connection one theme alone, of all those entering into the Q sample, is worth elaboration: It is statement no. 18, concerning "fear of not knowing." If the saliency for this could be raised from score +1 it receives in the opinion-clusters of factors A and B, to score +3 it has on factor C, then something "educative" would have been achieved. If one thinks about this for a moment, perhaps one will grasp something of the obduracy of opinions-in-the-making.

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