

Editorial

For the past four years we have been editing this journal both to print the most interesting advances in the field, and to discuss the epistemological, social and political stresses that are the scientists's lot today. In the course of this endeavor, we have run into many situations which have obliged us to reflect on issues explicitly that we ordinarily might have ignored. For example, we have had to decide whether or not to publish manuscripts that originate in places where the political chaos would hardly appear to allow anyone to concentrate on affairs as abstract as those which generally interest us; we have had to reject and accept papers on the basis of criteria, which though stringently adhered to in our reviewing procedures, are not very clear in substance. Finally, we have had to develop a position as to what Cognition as a field is and what it should be. In doing such things as these, we have accumulated so many unsolved questions that we believe it best to come straight out and talk candidly about our perception of the problems that hound us as editors and scientists.

It is obvious that we work within the framework of a cultural setting that obliges us to define what we think is valid and what is not. In our case, for example, we have tried to present papers that are theoretically relevant rather than papers that emanate from interesting observations but which are not presented in a wider frame of reference. Consequently, we have had to juggle such notions as *interesting*, *relevant*, *theory* and *frame of reference*: Our practical problem is how best to evaluate such notions. Of course, we use the usual methods for doing this, such as having referees who seem to us to be the most appropriate. We adhere strictly to the procedure of soliciting two reviews for each manuscript - two positive reviews are necessary for acceptance of a manuscript regardless of who the author may be or the nature of the subject matter. We also send a paper out to a third reviewer whenever the first two readers do not agree. All in all, we apply the standard methods which should allow us to proceed with some semblance of good conscience. Yet we remain uneasy.

The problem that we are raising concerns the implicit nature of the procedures that have been with us all for a great many years. Psychology, like other human sciences, has been influenced greatly by the cultural background in which it has developed. For instance, it is now clear that during the years when positivism and behaviorism dominated the field, other approaches were by and large ignored in publication. Clearly, explicit censorship was rarely used, nor was it needed. Rather, rigorous format monetary correlation accompanies this phenomenon. What is "good"

standards were established by editors in such a way as to favor manuscripts that originated in the "acceptable" scientific schools. A cultural provincialism developed rendering manuscripts that followed the accepted standards apparently more professional, better written and more comprehensible. As a result, the better known journals all began to look very much alike. Even after many scientists had given up the behaviorist dogma, they continued to mold their papers in the standard way, often masking their philosophical maturation behind a façade of useless procedures and empty statistics.

We embarked on our venture, *Cognition*, largely in reaction to this state of affairs at a time when the pattern was already beginning to change. In fact, the rigidity of the standards and the monotony of the many atheoretical studies led to a reaction which began in the sixties and has been emerging ever since. *Cognition* has succeeded in part thanks to this reaction. Our problem now is how to avoid being imprisoned by our success.

We now go through the same motions as did harassed editors before us. We have our own hobbyhorses and reviewing procedures to protect us. Our dilemma is this: We directly rejected the monotonous format of the standard journals in favor of an open style that would allow us to focus on content. We have discovered in the process that much of what traditionally passed for content was, in fact, form. With so many cognitive "theories" and so few direct empirical implications of *any* theory, how do our reviewers and we decide what to publish?

We must grapple openly with the fact that the atmosphere surrounding the judgment of the worth of an article has become so rarified that we had better go back and take another look at the whole issue of value judgments. Accordingly, we think it may be clarifying to consider the process of criticism in art. This is an area in which at least initially, utilitarian considerations were not at stake as they are in one way or another in most branches of science. If we manage to gain a little understanding of the situation currently existing in art, it is possible that we may shed a little light on what is occurring closer to home.

It is highly probable, that if questioned concerning which single painting in the world should be saved from the hecatomb, anyone having finished a secondary education would opt for the Gioconda. It is also equally likely that no consensus would result if the same population was asked which painting in the world they would most like to have hanging on their own wall providing, of course, they had the money to afford it. This observation, though admittedly rather superficial, would appear to demonstrate the fact that society obliges us to have a set of official standards and value judgments often far removed from our personal ones. Naturally, a certain

is unquestionably more expensive than what is not. However, it should be noted that there is generally very little *a priori* justification for our implicit value judgments. Our evaluations lead to no far-reaching theories on aesthetics and human nature. On the contrary, what generally occurs is the irrevocable division of society into those who produce art and those who consume it, with little interaction between the two. The producers quickly draw others into their group and the public soon follows, either to be in the vanguard of a new cultural trend, or for more venal considerations such as potential investment value. Thus, self defined market value determines a good part of the motivation for preserving certain works of art and not others.

Our own feeling is that there may well be an independent notion of "good" and "bad" art, based on a covert, aesthetic theory. Nonetheless, this does not affect our argument in one way or another. Most of the time our own feelings need not be closely related to the value judgments reigning in our community. Given the expertise and generally elitist properties required in order to appreciate the more dominant forms of art, there is very little relation between what we like personally, and the value that we as members of society attribute to works of art. Obviously, as academics, it would be hard for us to manifest the same disapproval or contempt for the dominant forms of art that we bestow on certain forms of popular art regardless of what our subjective judgment may be. In a wholly unalienated society it is possible that some form of universal aesthetic theory might be helpful in understanding the dynamics of this situation. However, in a system as plurally determined as ours, we doubt that it would do much good. What should be retained, however, is that aside from putative universal theory, a cultural pattern exists which controls us by fabricating a hierarchy of "good" and "bad" artists whom we select or reject in economic terms, thereby participating openly in the meritocratic system.

That a meritocracy serves certain purposes cannot be denied. It automatically limits active participation in any one field to a chosen few while relegating the majority to the role of a passive audience. However, in so doing it also often defeats the fundamental purpose of art, which is to give pleasure by expanding and gratifying our aesthetic senses. This state of affairs is particularly effective in societies where there is a need to use the production and consumption of art as a symbol for the distinctions that are the form and content of elitist political and economic structure. But our point is not to enter into a discussion of social injustice so we will not pursue this point any further. What we would like to stress is that artistic production and criticism have from the start been a form of value judgment aimed at drawing a clear distinction between those in control and those controlled.

With the passage of time, of course, the concept of what art is has undergone severe changes. It is possible, for example, to claim that the Beatles made an artistic contribution every bit as real as that of any composer working in the modern musical tradition. Schools and trends and their accompanying sets of value judgments are breaking up in all directions. Slicing one's ear with a razor blade is called "body art", while leaving a canvas blank is described as "minimal" art. This change in criterial attributes can be traced to the fact that society, with the dominance of technology in the last century, has shifted from emphasizing one symbol of social structure (art), to stressing another (science). Art has been freed of its social function and has in consequence been freed of the roots that constrained it. The artist today has few of the characteristics of his or her predecessors. Leonardo, or even, for that matter, the "pointillistes", were exploring domains which were to be *collectively* shared. Today, artists generally restrict themselves to the expression of idiosyncratic regularities of form and structure: It is the person of knowledge who has the power of representing our aims and delusions. We are the cultural heroes and it is our production that is subjected to societal ratings of "good" and "bad". In that sense, then, it is far from surprising that the current unconscious race for primacy of value-systems is being fought out in the sciences rather than in the arts.

In the light of this shift, it is necessary to explore the way in which we, as scientists, proceed in our daily endeavors, while at the same time acting as standard bearers for the characteristics that symbolize and ensure the hierarchical structure of our society. Science deals with the way in which we construct models of the world. This, in turn, allows us to predict and to control our environment. In this sense, therefore, it should be relatively easy to distinguish between those who contribute productively to such knowledge and those who do not. Although this was an acknowledged fact, the institutionalization of science has resulted in the proliferation of competitive domains, each of which has produced a long list of articles which will fall into oblivion without leaving any imprint on the environment or on the edifice of science. It is increasingly apparent that the selection of the domains to be studied can only partially be attributed to those who conduct the studies. Many intermediary organizations and social structures exert at least as much influence in determining research as any group or individual scientist. Finally, journals and other means of disseminating information have a great influence in shaping the direction of research.

These considerations lead us full circle back to our concern about current behavioral science and our role in it as teachers, researchers, authors and editors. The main difficulty that we see is that the true intended product of

behavioral science, knowledge about humanity, has become clearly alienated from the means which are supposed to produce this product. That is, scientific publications are presumed to lead to increased knowledge; but they serve so many other purposes that are more directly manifest, that their production and consumption has become an independent value. This is reflected in a variety of facts some of which are well-known, but some of which have surprised us as we have discovered them.

It is obvious that this editorial has raised issues related mostly to judgments of value. If this is so, it is because it is easy to discern a certain unrest in the scientific community over the dichotomy which prevails between the ways in which we think and feel and the ways in which we actually proceed in everyday life. It would be possible to demonstrate that our comments apply not only to publications and editors but also to the conditions of our employment, promotion or income, the treatment meted out to us by funding agencies, our selection to committees, the pressures of specialization, etc., etc. In fact, although it is rarely discussed as such, the whole issue of value judgments underlies much of our everyday life.

It is never apparent how the scientist's desire to produce new knowledge and the more down to earth considerations such as advancement, power needs, the desire to secure the highest possible evaluation and the most praise, interact to determine our behavior. This being said, we have not raised the questions we have, in order then to be able to enumerate one hundred and eleven rules and regulations for solving the problems of the scientific community, nor to pass judgment on motivations or lack of them. It is our contention that no individual or single organism can do this without playing into the hands of the existing system. Alternatively we feel that it is only by raising a general awareness to the ways in which our feelings and desires diverge from our practices and how the latter are shaped and molded, that a collective form of change that does not contain the vices of the current system may be defined. It is only natural then, that we should invite you to join in a discussion and debate of all or some of these issues in the coming numbers of this journal.

J. MEHLER
T. BEVER
S. FRANCK