Book Note

A Review of *Psychological Aspects of Language*, Edited by Chase and Parrott

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Although language is irrefutably the most important aspect of human behavior, a survey of the behavioral literature and the content of the behavioral training programs does not reflect this. Behavior analysts, however, can no longer afford to ignore the topic of verbal behavior because major breakthroughs in our understanding of behavior are dependent on the behavioral analysis of language. This was the spirit of the West Virginia Lectures.

The lectures were published in the book *Psychological Aspects of Language* (1986), edited by Chase and Parrott. The book contains a variety of papers and commentaries by well-known authors, most of whom were guest lecturers at West Virginia University during the 1982-83 academic year. The authors clearly do not represent a cohesive group, but the eight chapters provide a stimulating collection of papers. Chase begins the first section, "Theoretical Perspectives and Techniques," with a comparison of the associative, cognitive, and operant models of verbal learning. In the next chapter, Palmer provides a review of Chomsky's nativism. The last chapter in this section is a critique of operant conditioning by Ribes. The second section, "Refinement of Key Language Events," contains three fine-grained analyses of specific aspects of a behavioral analysis of language. Parrott analyzes the distinctions between verbal and social behavior, mainly emphasizing the views of J. R. Kantor. Var-

gas suggests some new terms for Skinner's classification of verbal behavior controlled by verbal stimuli, and Place examines moral judgment and its relationship to verbal behavior. The final section, "An Example of Research and an Example of Application," contains two chapters. Bernstein presents research on the relation between verbal and nonverbal behavior, and Moxley provides a functional analysis of reading. Each chapter is followed by one or two commentaries.

Several of the book's chapters and commentaries are important ones. Chase's introductory chapter clearly points out the differences between the popular views of language and the behavioral view. This chapter will be useful for instructors who teach verbal behavior and wish to educate students painlessly in the traditional approaches to language. Palmer's critique of Chomsky is well written, and also has a pedagogical function.

Moxley's chapter, "A Functional Analysis of Reading," is excellent. It presents an interesting demonstration of how to use Skinner's analysis of verbal behavior to improve our understanding of reading. Moxley points out that reading involves a number of different repertoires that are usually under multiple sources of control. A careful analysis of these repertoires, and their controlling variables, can lead to improved instructional programs and to more effective reading. This work is particularly important because, as Pennypacker pointed out in his 1986 ABA presidential address (see Pennypacker, 1986), behavior analysts need to begin solving some of the world's major prob-

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lems in order to receive the recognition the field deserves. One of the problems identified by Pennypacker is the high illiteracy rate in this country.

Another excellent analysis can be found in the chapter by Vargas on intraverbal behavior. Vargas extends Skinner's analysis of "verbal behavior under the control of verbal stimuli" (Skinner, 1957, pp. 52-80) by carefully distinguishing between, and naming, several different types of verbal relations. The new terms proposed by Vargas do not identify new or previously overlooked relations. Rather, they provide names for implied categories that were previously difficult to classify. Vargas supports Michael's (1982) use of the terms "duplic" and "codic" as major category names, and introduces the terms "identigraphic" (copying a text) and mimetic (imitation) as types of duplic behavior. Vargas also suggests that the term "intraverbal" be used as a name for all verbal behavior controlled by verbal stimuli, and that "sequelic" be used as a term for verbal behavior controlled by verbal stimuli that lack point-to-point correspondence.

Parrott's chapter on the difference between verbal and social behavior is a thoughtful analysis of a complicated issue. The underlying theme of the chapter, however, seems to be Kantor versus Skinner. I feel Kantor's and Skinner's orientations can be compatible, and each can benefit from the other, but Parrott's efforts do not have this effect. As a Skinnerian, I find it hard to read past Parrott's constant criticisms of Skinner when they seem mainly to function as a vehicle to present Kantor's views. Moreover, I agree with Chase's point in the accompanying commentary that Parrott has "erroneously criticized" Skinner.

Bernstein's chapter on verbal and nonverbal behavior is influenced by the work of the late Theodore Mischel. As a result, the chapter focuses on how Mischel's work is compatible with behavioral orientations if the reader overlooks the cognitive analyses. This chapter is interesting, and Bernstein skillfully demonstrates correspondence between verbal and nonverbal behavior. The chapter,

however, is only marginally relevant to the concepts of verbal behavior, and does not reflect the rich possibilities of research in the verbal behavior area. The book could have benefited from a better demonstration of research.

The chapters by Ribes and Place are unnecessarily negative and seem out of place. These papers detract from, rather than contribute to, the development of a behavior analysis of language. Reese's and Schnaitter's respective commentaries on these chapters are tactful and well done.

All the commentaries, as a matter of fact, are excellent and are perhaps the best features of the book. They provide timely reviews, and a better understanding of the material. The commentaries by Holland and by Reese are especially good. Holland's points about a continuous repertoire and automatic consequences are important, and ripe for research. The other commentaries by Donahoe, Chase, Hineline, Schnaitter, Catania, and Johnson also contain several exciting analyses and research suggestions.

In 1978, Skinner wrote, "*Verbal Behavior* . . . will, I believe, prove to be my most important work" (p. 122). The proving may take some time, but the publication of the West Virginia Lectures demonstrates that behaviorists are finally recognizing the importance of verbal behavior for the analysis of behavior in general. The authors may disagree about how verbal behavior should be defined, analyzed, and researched, but at least they all agree that the topic cannot be ignored.

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