Letters

Mental Events in Psychology

In his review (8 May, p. 711) of the second volume of J. R. Kantor's *The Scientific Evolution of Psychology*, Lowry presents a total misunderstanding of both Kantor's intellectual position and his contribution to psychology.

One is reminded of the effect of the publication of the *Malleus Maleficarum* by Sprenger and Kraemer in 1489, which marked a watershed in the history of demonology. This book became a vade mecum whereby heresy in all its forms was to be detected and rooted out. It was in fact an early systemization of the craft of condemnation by seizing upon significant albeit trivial characteristics of a person's behavior. As such, this work is as relevant in this present time of intellectual dogmas as it was in earlier days when theological considerations were paramount.

Lowry would appear to be a latter-day practitioner of the Sprenger and Kraemer method of *deducere ex trivia*. The essential argument of his review is that as Kantor shares with Watson a repugnance for fictitious and transcendental mental entities, then he is of necessity a Watsonian Behaviorist. Hence the statement, "Thus, in Kantor's view, the scientific maturity of psychology at any given time is an inverse function of its concern with such fictitious matter as thinking, perception, emotion, and the like."

Kantor has always been a major critic of the methodological behaviorists who naively choose to deny such important behavioral events as thinking and imagining and thus unwittingly subscribe to an unacceptable dualist position. On page 389 of the volume under review, Kantor writes, "Behavioristic psychologists have for decades provided examples of a confusion of conditioning and learning with psychological events. Accordingly, they have neglected the study of perceiving, emotional reactions, reasoning, attention, and other modes of behavior." In other words it is clear that Kantor totally rejects the Behaviorist attempt to prune from psychology all problems other than those of conditioning and learning. The unfortunate consequence of

this attempt, he argues, is that "in practice Behaviorism has made psychology a renunciatory discipline. . ." (p. 367).

The richness of Kantor's thought cannot be conveyed in a letter. Here, we simply draw attention to the fact that, as early as 1924, Kantor (in *Principles of Psychology*) attempted to formulate a naturalistic psychology that preserved the complexity of actual psychological events. It has taken psychology considerable time to begin to assimilate Kantor's thought [see (*1*) for an excellent and recent essay on Kantor's work on the psychology of language and logic]. We hope that Lowry's misleading review does not prevent those who might profit from exposure to Kantor's thoughts from reading this book.

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Reference

1. W. N. Schoenfeld, *J. Exp. Anal. Behav.* **12**, 329–47 (1969).
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Hope for City Government

Savas ("Cybernetics in City Hall," 29 May, p. 1066) is to be commended for his recognition that control theory (or "cybernetics") has more than a small role to play in the governmental process. A public expression of this realization has been inordinately long in coming. Although we most wholeheartedly agree with his hope that "the cybernetics sector of the intellectual community can be drawn to the problems of cities in earnest," we find it highly doubtful that more than a tiny handful of "political scientists, public administrators, and urbanologists will avail themselves of the rich concepts and theories of cybernetics" in the near future. From personal experience in "The California Experiment" (*1*) of 1964–65, it was abundantly clear that a great majority of public officials were not then ready for cybernetics, the sys-

tems approach, or anything else that threatened the established methods of political decision-making.

Admittedly, a lot of arm-waving has gone over the dam since then, and enlightened city governments willing to trust some of their resources to young, technically competent management scientists and planners are finally becoming visible. To attract elements of the intellectual community so that they will become effectively involved in City Hall problems, Savas and his counterparts in other enlightened city governments must continue to demonstrate political and economic support. . . . It is perhaps unfortunate that Savas did not extend his argument to making a case for the cybernetics approach at the state and national level. Complex as the problems of our cities are, they are but microcosms of the nation as a whole. It is more than possible that "what is good for New York will also be good for the country." It is also possible that the subsystem represented by New York so interacts with its environment that, unaided, stable solutions may be unrealizable.

Hopefully, in the concern over air pollution, water pollution, solid waste disposal, urban dynamics, welfare dependence, transportation demands, crime, racial strife, and population growth, as related to national and international priorities, the state and federal governments will also recognize the value of the cybernetics approach to these problems on a state and national level. Perhaps Savas's ambitions for New York can be applied to the rest of the nation as well.

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Note

1. The California Experiment was a series of six programs undertaken by various California aerospace firms which for the first time tested the applicability of using aerospace and management techniques to solve fundamental social problems.

Without wishing to disparage the benefits of efficient management at City Hall, I find it unlikely that cybernetics can do what Savas claims for it, within our system of government. Only if we continue to weaken the legislative branches of government need we turn to a "market research" approach to governance. If we do that, then perhaps cybernetics can hold a balance between repression and revolt, for a while.

The assumption that Savas makes, "Elections, for example, fail to register