

Glasser, Book review, Foreword, New View Publishing

Unedited posts from archives of CSG-L (see INTROCSG.NET):

Date: Sun Feb 13, 1994 8:27 pm PST
Subject: Mistress PCT,

[From Rick Marken (940213.2010)]

I have come to believe that the principle of maintaining continuity with past developments in psychology (for example) is not only unimportant to the goal of developing and promulgating PCT, it can actively interfere with that goal. My experience has been that well-intentioned efforts to find a place for PCT in some existing theory of behavior, or to find a place for some existing theory of behavior in PCT, always requires contradicting some basic tenet of PCT. The result is a complete mangling of PCT. This is what happened to Carver and Scheier, Locke, Hyland and many others who found (or still find) PCT attractive; these people were unwilling to give up their marriages to other theories. The result was that PCT became a mistress (and a rather abused one) rather than a wife. I guess I believe that it is as impossible to have an honest relationship with two theories at the same time as it is to have an honest, intimate relationship with two women at the same time -- even if you THINK that they can get along. Eventually, you are forced to choose.

One of PCT's most faithless suitors has been William Glasser, who has a new book out called "The Control Theory Manager". It is very short and I plan to post a review of it shortly. I recommend this book as an excellent example of what happens to people who want to keep PCT as a mistress while maintaining their marriage to another theory (in Glasser's case, "reality therapy"). I think we all know who gets the shaft when the day of reckoning arrives.

Best Rick

Date: Mon Feb 14, 1994 8:38 pm PST
Subject: Mary on genes

[from Mary Powers 940214]

As for Glasser, he switched over a long time ago from PCT to control a la Ellen Langer (or is he back again?). Langer wrote a book a few years ago which included the wonderful consequences of giving old people "a sense of control" over certain aspects of their lives. What she missed was that they had been sensing, correctly, that they had been deprived of control and were pretty unhappy about it. There was to me a strong implication of smoke and mirrors about "giving a sense of control", like it wasn't real, and someone else was still very much in charge, handing out "control" in doses. But on the positive side, she may be pretty influential in, say, having nursing homes lighten up on petty regulations and encourage autonomy, even if it makes life more inconvenient for the staff.

Mary P.

Date: Thu Feb 24, 1994 11:34 pm PST
Subject: An offer you can refuse

[From Rick Marken (940224.2330)]

Review of "The Control Theory Manager" by William Glasser, M. D. (NY: HarperBusiness, 1993)

I have been having a hell of a time trying to review Glasser's book. I think the problem is this: in order to review this book properly I think I would

have to rewrite it. Glasser is ostensibly trying to present a simplified description of control theory for managers. But there is very little control theory (as we know it) to be found. Reading "The Control Theory Manager" is a bit like reading many of the posts on this net: Glasser says many things that, when generously interpreted, sound like descriptions of aspects of control theory but they sound like many other theories too. The problem with "The Control Theory Manager" is not so much what Glasser says as what he doesn't say -- hence the feeling that an appropriate review of this book (by someone who knows control theory) would simply be a different book.

The problems start off right off the bat because, in the "Control theory manager" Glasser never just comes out and describes control theory. Indeed, the first half of this very short book (123 pages) is dedicated to a discussion of management styles. Glasser distinguishes "boss" management from "lead" management. Glasser says little more about boss and lead management styles than one could glean from their names but he does make an important point; Glasser argues that people trust a management style that is congruent with their implicit theory of human nature. "Boss" management is based on the idea that people are "extrinsically" motivated; lead management is based on the idea that people are "intrinsically" motivated. Extrinsic motivation means that external events -- stimuli -- determine what people do; this is S-R psychology. Intrinsic motivation means that people "choose" what they do; this is control theory psychology. Glasser argues (rightly, I think) that managers will not trust the "lead management" approach to management until they are convinced that people are control systems, not S-R devices (Glasser never states it this clearly -- but this is his thesis).

The second part of the book should be aimed at telling managers what control theory is and why they should believe that it is better than S-R theory. But unfortunately we find out precious little about control theory and virtually nothing that would convince us that it is better than S-R theory. The basics of control theory are described in chapters 5, 6 and 7. Here's what we find out: control theory says that 1) people choose what they do 2) that you cannot make anyone do what he or she does not want to do 3) that behavior is caused by what goes on inside people's heads and 4) that people choose behaviors in order to satisfy one or more of five basic needs -- survival, love, power, freedom and fun. So, after reading a whole chapter on control theory I learn that the people do what they do in order to satisfy their basic needs. I'm prepared to believe that this will not come as a huge revelation to American managers.

Glasser says much more about what control theory is not than about what it is. What control theory is not is (guess what) S-R theory. For example, Glasser notes that the stimulus in stimulus response theory "is, in control theory, more accurately called information, and we know that, by itself, information does not make us do anything". So control theory says that people are surrounded by information that they can select, as needed, to satisfy their basic needs. This aspect of control theory leads to a great management insight: "lead managers give workers information that will persuade them to come to the conclusion that expending the effort to do quality work will satisfy them better than anything else they can do at this time". Glasser doesn't say what the lead managers should do if the worker's decide that the information about a cold Miller's Draft will satisfy them better than the information about expending effort to do quality work. Glasser is obviously trying to give the impression that the lead managers are not controlling. But, of course, they are -- as are the workers and Glasser himself, who is trying to control for you buying the arguments in this book.

Glasser's failure to mention that the lead manager is controlling (trying to get a quality product produced, using the workers as the means) is not an accident. Glasser never describes controlling at all, making one wonder why he is all excited about a theory called "control" theory. Glasser obviously wants to avoid the "c" word when it's use might, in any way, suggest manipulation of other people. I can understand this -- Glasser is obviously a very humane person and wants to be perceived as such -- but then why put the "c" word right up there on the cover of the book? Why not call it "The intrinsic need theory manager" or "The not S-R theory manager"? I finally find out why on p. 58: "We all want to have a sense of control over what we do. This is why control theory is called control theory". So control theory is about having a

"sense of control". But what is control? Do we have to have it in order to have a sense of it? I'm sure Glasser can rest assured that those questions are no more likely to occur to his audience than to himself.

We eventually find out that we need to have more than just a sense of control. In the chapter on "The Quality World" we learn that "what all of us, functioning as control systems, are always trying to do is control the real world so that it is as close as we can get it to our quality world". The term "quality world" is an image in the brain that specifies the way the world "should be"; a reference signal. Glasser is saying that we are always acting to make the world as it is (the real world) like the world as it should be. This is the closest Glasser ever comes to a description of the control theory model of human nature. But, of course, there are problems. For one thing, Glasser never says what a "control system" is so it doesn't help much to learn that people function as control systems. He might as well have said that they function as self-organizing systems -- whatever those are.

Glasser also makes the mistake of saying that people control the "real world" (I suppose this is a vestige of his "reality therapy" past). In fact, people can only control the world as they experience it. This is a very important point, not only from a theoretical perspective but also from a practical perspective. Management problems often turn on failure to recognize the fact that workers and managers are dealing with their own perceptions of a product (and the processes used to produce it) not the "real thing". An important part of lead management, according to control theory, is achieving consensus on what aspect of everyone's perceptions of a product is to be made to match the "quality image".

Glasser never discusses one of the most important aspects of control theory; the fact that, in order to achieve control (get the real world to match the "quality world") people must be able to do whatever is necessary to counteract disturbances that would interfere with production of these quality results; people must be able to vary the means they use to achieve "quality" ends. By not mentioning this "disturbance resisting" aspect of control, Glasser misses a chance to point out another important lesson that control theory has for managers: boss management fails when the boss insists on the means that must be used to produce quality ends; this hamstringing the worker who often has to sacrifice quality ends in order to satisfy the managers goals; lead management succeeds because the leader explains what results are to be produced and allows the worker to use whatever means are needed to produce it; the means that are used must necessarily vary due to changing circumstances in the production process .

The weakness of Glasser's treatment of control theory is matched in spades by the absence of any description of the phenomenon that control theory explains -- control. It would not have been difficult to point to examples of control - people controlling the direction of cars, the shape of buildings, the "quality" of products. Control is everywhere, except in "The Control Theory Manager". Because Glasser provides no description of control, he provides no evidence for control theory. Glasser gives manager's only one reason for accepting control theory: it supports "Total Quality Management". The problem is that Glasser wants managers to accept TQM on the basis of their support for control theory. By describing some of the copious evidence for control theory, Glasser could have avoided placing managers in this paradoxical situation.

The message of "The Control Theory Manager" seems to be that managers should learn how to "persuade" rather than "boss" their employees. As I read the book it began to become apparent that the Godfather would be the perfect example of "The Control Theory Manager". Don Corlione never bossed people. He liked to reason with them; present them with information (like a horse's head in their bed) that would help them come to quality decisions; he knew how to persuade his workers -- by making them an offer they couldn't refuse. Don Corlione knew how to provide information that would help people understand how they could achieve one of the five (count them, five) basic needs -- the need for survival. Yes, the Godfather was "The Control Theory Manager".

"The Control Theory Manager" is an unfortunate example of a well-meaning but hopelessly muddled attempt to describe and promulgate a scientific theory before that theory (or the nature of theory itself) is understood. The control

theory model of behavior that Glasser purports to describe in this book was developed in the early 1950s by William T. Powers. Glasser became aware of this theory when he read Powers' description of it in "Behavior: The control of perception" (Chicago: Aldine, 1973). Glasser refers to Powers' book but modestly adds that control theory "was first presented in a form that people could both use in their work and in their life in my 1984 book, "Control Theory" What Glasser fails to mention is that "The Control Theory Manager" describes a version of control theory that is only loosely based on the scientific version developed by Powers. Most of Glasser's control theory is based on interpretations and misinterpretations of how control theory actually works. Glasser's version of "control theory" now consists of little more than a set of claims that are often demonstrably wrong (such as the claim that people "choose their behavior"). By abjuring even the slightest interest in developing a rigorous version of control theory, Glasser ends up with a set of singularly uninformative bromides for management.

Control theory does have much to say about how managers can work cooperatively with workers to produce "quality" results but you won't find out what is by reading "The Control Theory Manager".

Date: Wed May 18, 1994 2:37 pm PST
Subject: Eric Newton welcome, Glasser

[From Dag Forssell (940518 1445)] Eric Newton (940511 0900)

> I would like to join the CSGnet group and begin participating in the dialogue about Perceptual Control Theory.

You are very welcome to our group. I am personally very pleased, since I understand your major reason for joining is your exposure to applications of PCT.

> I am in a K-12 public school district in Southwest Wyoming, USA, where Control Theory is a major focus of our school redesign efforts. We have over 100 teachers and school administrators who now have training in Control Theory and we are anxious to continue our learning and application of CT. . . . Personally, I am Asst. Supt of Schools here in Green River, Wyoming, and have trained with Ed Ford and the Institute for Reality Therapy. I will complete my certification with the Institute next February and look forward to learning more from the members of this dialogue group about applications of CT outside the setting the Institute targets.

I saw you briefly last June when my wife Christine and I were Ed's guests in a training session in Green River. I know you have all of the literature Ed has recommended, starting most significantly with Behavior: The Control of Perception (BCP), by Bill Powers.

I, too, learned of the Control Systems Group through Glasser. Back in 1983 or so, I read a book on leadership that recommended Reality Therapy. I liked it, and read other Glasser books, such as Positive Addiction and The Identity Society. Then I came to Stations of the Mind. Is a re-write of BCP with Bill Powers full cooperation and guidance. I attended the first week of "certification" training and came to know some of the faculty and staff of the Institute for Reality Therapy. I also recorded a day-long seminar with Dr. Glasser and made an audio tape album the institute sold.

I have also read most of the subsequent books on Control Theory by Dr. Glasser. Each has said less about Bill Powers, and explained less.

Control Theory is now portrayed as Dr. Glasser's creation and bears a strong resemblance to Reality Therapy, as it existed even before Dr. Glasser heard of BCP.

If you read Bill Power's post today about the power curve, [POWER_CU.RVE] you understand that Reality Therapy as Dr. Glasser's life work is far more important than Perceptual Control Theory (so named in part to distinguish it from Dr. Glasser's creation). It follows that Dr. Glasser has changed his

understanding of Control Theory and his teaching of it to support Reality Therapy. He did not want to change Reality Therapy to draw strength from a complete understanding of PCT. This is what Ed Ford has done with Freedom From Stress and his parent/teacher seminars. Several members of this Control Systems Group are very familiar with Dr. Glasser, and conclude that he has never grasped Control Theory. We also think his ethics stink when he portrays himself as the guru on Control Theory. Just read the Preface to Stations of the Mind, and compare to recent writings. Note also that he never explains Control Theory, just tells you what his conclusions from it are. (He is the guru, not you, and this is too hard for you to understand) "Control Theory contends that"

I hesitated to buy a book over \$20, so it was not until 1988 that I decided to pop for BPC itself, then at \$30+. I found it very easy to read. In a Glasser meeting in mid 1989, a faculty member recommended Freedom From Stress and through it I learned of the Control Systems Group. I visited Ed Ford in October for a whole day while on a business trip, and have since participated in the CSG and for the last three years on this net.

I love Glasser, because through him I found BCP and the Control Systems Group. I also think he has many sensible and thought provoking comments on life in his many books.

I hate Glasser, because I perceive him as a "holier than thou" guru on the lecture circuit who has a false message for an army of devoted followers and thus hinders the adoption of a correct understanding of PCT.

There are others on this net who have come to CSG through Glasser, just like you and I. I hope you will find your participation here the wonderful learning experience I and many others have. Your questions and comments on applications will be most welcome. I felt it would be fair to give you these comments as background information and a perspective you may not have had. We shall see if you or someone else disagrees -- that is when people speak up.

Best, Dag

Date: Sun, 30 Oct 1994 15:42:03 GMT
Subject: William Glasser's: Control Theory

From Brian Hartman

As a graduate student in education, I have been exposed very heavily to S-R theory and the conclusions it brings with it. I did not realize that there was a competing theory until I ran across a book called, The Quality School by William Glasser (1990, I think). As an educator, everything we are trained to do in the classroom is based on S-R theory and frankly, it isn't working anymore. Glasser takes a different approach, which he calls control theory, that theorizes that people control their own behavior based on what they think is going to meet their needs the best.

The questions I have are:

- 1) Is Glasser's theory a spinoff of PCT, or is this his own theory?
- 2) How does Glasser's Control theory differ from PCT?
- 3) Would anyone have any introductory papers, dissertations or books to recommend to me as I try to understand PCT vs. S-R theory?

I am sorry if you have talked about this recently. I have tried to read this newsgroup, but don't have the necessary background. I have done literature and book searches on PCT without much success. None of my Psychology teachers seem to know much about PCT, so I am coming to the horses mouth itself.

Thanks in advance for any information you can provide.

Brian Hartman

Date: Mon, 31 Oct 1994 08:45:55 -0600
Subject: Re: Glasser and PCT

[from Mary Powers 9410.31 boo!]

Brian Hartman [9410.30]

Welcome to the horse's mouth. You are the most recent of a number of people who first ran across control theory by reading Glasser. I hope the following is helpful.

1. William Glasser ran across control theory in about 1980. He wrote a book, Stations of the Mind (1981) after having read Bill Powers' Behavior: the Control of Perception, then spending a day talking with him, and following that up with phone calls every few weeks for a year or so.

2. Glasser is convinced that what he has done is expand and clarify control theory. He hasn't - he still thinks of behavior as that which is controlled rather than as the means by which perceptions are controlled. The control of perception is the main sticking point in understanding control theory, and Glasser, like many others, doesn't get it.

3. Besides Powers' BCP (above) (Aldine/DeGruyter, 1973), I would suggest Gary Cziko, Purposive behavior as the control of perception, Educational Researcher, 21, 9, p 10-18 (1992), and, for a non-technical introduction that is really up your alley, Edward E. Ford, Discipline for Home and School: teaching children to respect the rights of others through responsible thinking based on Perceptual Control Theory.

Come back on the net any time with questions, comments, etc.

Mary P.

Date: Mon, 31 Oct 1994 16:03:00 EST
Subject: Glasser & PCT

Ed Ford (941031)

Brian Hartman questions:

> Is Glasser's theory a spinoff of PCT, or is this his own theory?

Glasser first attempted to learn PCT from Bill Powers and wrote his original book on the subject "Stations of the Mind" based on what he knew at the time. Glasser now teaches what he calls Control Theory, but in my view it is very much the same as cognitive theory. Glasser still talks about controlling behavior. PCT talks about controlling perception, or input. Glasser never has gotten this, which is evident both in his writings and in what he says. This is a very critical difference.

> How does Glasser's Control theory differ from PCT?

See above. Also, Glasser talks about needs. He himself in various workshops has admitted the concept of needs is his idea and not based on hard research. I personally believe we create our own goals and form the various criteria that go into making those goals relevant to us. [discontinuity in original] te For Reality Therapy have no idea what PCT is all about, with the exception of those who have also joined the CSG. His diagrams and writings have no relation to the complex concept of PCT. For example, he perceives reorganization as a disturbance, and it isn't. Feelings as behaviors and they aren't.

> Would anyone have any introductory papers, dissertations, or books to recommend...

I've contacted Dag Forssell who occasionally sends up on the net an entire summary of PCT plus available literature and video tapes. I've written several books on PCT, including Freedom From Stress and my latest, the result of much work in two inner city schools, entitled Discipline For Home And School. My

background includes 13 years as a faculty and certifying member of the Institute For Reality Therapy.

Ed Ford

Date: Tue Feb 07, 1995 3:24 pm PST
Subject: Glasser

[From Dag Forssell (950207 1130)]

Lars, thanks for your note. I believe my answer will be of general interest, so I take the liberty of answering on the net.

> Subject: Glasser
> From: Lars-Christian SMITH Tue Feb 07, 1995
>
> Dear Dag,
>
> Just got a parcel from New View with Introduction to Modern Psychology;
> I had also ordered Mind Readings but it is on backorder.
>
> However, also included was a New View catalog, with lots of weird and
> wonderful books. What is Glasser's stuff like? His books are not on the
> CSG reading list. Was there a schism?
>
> Best regards, Lars

Questions about Glasser surface from time to time on CSGnet. Yes, there was a schism.

Glasser is known for Reality Therapy, and has written several well known books besides: Schools without failure, The identity society, Positive addiction etc.

I learned of him in the early 80's and think I benefitted from reading these books. If it was not for Glasser, I would probably not have heard of PCT. Same goes for Ed Ford and several others on CSGnet.

As I have heard Glasser tell in a public seminar, friends of his suggested in the late 70's that he read B:CP. He did, and found an explanation of why Reality Theory works. I heard him say that if he had read B:CP first, he would have had to come up with Reality Therapy. He wanted to rewrite B:CP in what he considered more readable form and did. Bill Powers gave him extensive help. The result was Stations of the Mind, published by Harper and Row in 1981. The foreword and Preface of this book leave little doubt as to where Glasser learned Control Theory.

Glasser proceeded to write many books on the theme of control theory -- Control Theory; Control Theory in the Classroom; The Quality School; The Control Theory Manager. His later books mention Powers in some minor footnote as a dissident point of view, leaving the impression that Glasser is THE guru an control theory. What PCT'ers see is that he has gutted the theory of what is inconvenient to teach (perception is eliminated altogether) and changed it around so it fits Reality Therapy to his satisfaction (every action is our best attempt to satisfy our needs). PCT'ers recognize that Glasser controls his perceptions of what is important to him -- himself and Reality Therapy -- and accept this as perfectly normal for a member of our species. He is certainly a disturbance to our perceptions of how PCT should be explained. If you read his books, you will note that he never explains control theory, but tells you what conclusions HE draws from it. (He is the guru. You are supposed to take his word for it). His books are no different than any other management books: pronouncements from personal interpretations of personal experience. They read well and stimulate thought, just like the Weinberg book you recommended to me. But also just like Weinberg, they have little or nothing to do with control theory. I have heard a recording from a Glasser conference where he discusses Powers' control theory in comparison to his own control theory: we say -- they say.... It is clear to me that Glasser does not understand control theory.

Glasser and his Institute for Reality Therapy has a large following among therapists and teachers. Reality Therapy makes more sense than many alternatives. I certainly liked it when I learned it. New View owners Fred and Perry Good have learned from Glasser and publish books for Glasser readers. Through Glasser and Ed Ford (Ed was a longtime member of the faculty at Glasser's Institute for Reality Therapy -- Freedom From Stress is the adaptation of Reality Therapy in light of PCT that Glasser could not write because he never understood PCT), the Good's learned of the Control Systems Group. They have attended CSG conferences for a few years and have now taken over publication of CSG books. This allows New View to offer "the real thing" as well as existing Glasser and related books. PCTers think it is a good thing to make "the real thing" available to all those interested therapists, teachers and whatever who want to learn how to support their fellow men. I am pleased that my collection of articles: Management and Leadership: Insight for effective practice will also be distributed by New View.

The catalog you received is no doubt from last spring. New View will be ready with a new catalog in about a week, and will make a large mailing to existing customers and potential new ones. In the catalog, PCT books will be listed in their own section, separate from Glasser's Control Theory and Reality Therapy. The fact that Glasser uses the term Control Theory will no doubt create confusion and questions for a long time to come. That is a fact of life and will simply require explanations from time to time. We welcome people who have read Glasser's introductions, become curious, find out about CSG and ask for clarification about PCT.

Best, Dag

Date: Thu Feb 16, 1995 6:34 pm PST
Subject: How PCT developed, (Glasser)

[Dag Forssell (950216 1230)]

Bryan Frew just asked about the origins of PCT. I just scanned the foreword to Stations of the Mind in order to send it to a friend. I have used some quotes from this foreword for a long time. As I review it, I notice that it provides a partial answer for Bryan. This is not intended as a substitute for Bill P's own answer, but I think CSGnetters may enjoy this foreword.

Best, Dag

STATIONS OF THE MIND; NEW DIRECTIONS IN REALITY THERAPY

William Glasser, M.D.

Harper & Row 1981

FOREWORD

Bill Glasser has invented an unusual method for learning a new theory: write a book about it. Judging from the result, I think I can recommend this method for those with the intellectual honesty, the energy, and the persistence to carry it through.

The new theory is called control theory. It's about forty years old, which makes it an adolescent on the time-scale along which scientific revolutions develop. Control theory started its major growth in the 1930s, among engineers trying to design not controllable devices, but controlling devices.

Without being particularly interested in psychology or biology, these engineers succeeded in discovering a kind of organization which could have inner purposes and which, instead of reacting to external forces, could sense and act on the world around it and thus control aspects of that world. The result, the servomechanism, has caused a second Industrial Revolution already, but science is just starting to realize that the industrial side of the revolution may be far less important than the revolution in our understanding of living systems that grows from this new concept of organization.

Scientific theories of human nature have never made much sense to nonprofessionals. Scientific theories either have been so statistical that they don't say anything interesting about individuals, or have implied things about us that anyone with common sense can see aren't true (for example, the preposterous assertion that what we think can't have any effect on what we do). Psychology in particular has been a disappointment, promising much and producing essentially nothing with the power to change our lives that, say, the transistor has had. Unless we have to take a test to get a job or enter college, most of us aren't touched by psychological theories at all. When we do brush against them, the result is usually threatening or annoying.

Control theory, the theory of how living organisms control what happens to them, does make common sense. It makes so much common sense, in fact, that in this book you won't find anything that sounds like technology, unless you count one diagram and about four specialized terms. For example, you'll hardly encounter the term "feedback," even though feedback is what makes control systems work.

What you will find are the basic organizational concepts of control theory so cleverly worked into Glasser's exposition that most of the time you're likely to think, "Great--but doesn't everyone know that?" The answer is no, not by a long shot. Common sense can be trusted only so far; it lets us down nearly as often as it works. Scientific theories, when they get on the right track, can bolster our common sense, but also refine it and change it to fit more of the facts. Control just reaffirm common sense. But one strong hint that control theory is on the right track is that you won't have to know any control theory in the mathematical or engineering sense in order to grasp its meaning correctly. There's nothing that can be said about control theory that can't be said another way in plain language, still correctly.

Glasser has been scrupulously careful to check his understanding of control theory with me every step of the way. If there are any differences between his concepts and mine as the book now reaches its final stages, they are unimportant, and tend to be in areas where the theory itself needs work.

As far as the main concepts in this book are concerned, you can be sure that Bill has checked his translation against my understanding, and that in the background there is a solid scientific foundation for what he asserts about systems that can control their own inputs.

Bill Glasser didn't ask me for a book review or a testimonial; he just asked if I'd write a little about the origins of control theory as we use it. Having exercised my freedom of speech, I suppose I'd better do as he asked. My path to understanding has been devious, and I've worked alone for the most part, so this is a personal story even though others have influenced and taught me in degrees from a little to a lot.

Warren McCullough first influenced me when I was in high school. His daughter Taffy joined my class, and I became aware of her father, a tall figure with a long straggly beard and fiery eyes that scared the hell out of me. McCullough lived in a house that Charles Addams could have drawn, and I was certain that I would never be like that mysterious and crazy-looking man. A neurosurgeon, I heard--brrr! A theoretician--yuck!

He was in fact a famous neurologist who was already a leading figure in cybernetics, of which I had never heard. Some of his friends and colleagues were named Pitts, Ashby, Von Foerster, and Wiener--Norbert Wiener, who while I was fresh out of high school and immersed in learning electronics for the sake of World War II, was starting cybernetics and launching this scientific revolution that is still developing. None of these people knew me, but five years later, in 1950, I came to know of them. I read most of what they wrote, and was hooked.

In 1953 I became convinced that the phenomenon of feedback and especially automatic control based on feedback held the key to a new understanding of human nature. With only a BS in physics and no funds for graduate school, I resolved to work on this new theory in my spare time, earning a living in the fields of technology that I knew. That approach became a habit; I'm still

working at honest labor and being a theoretician on the side, although my family might disagree with that order of priorities. In retrospect I can see that there was no other choice. My path diverged enough from the paths followed by others that there was no way to pursue my work in more conventional surroundings. Scientific revolutions are not popular among their victims. There are good reasons why theoreticians often work alone.

You've never heard of R. K. Clark (until now), but I owe this to him. From 1953 to 1960 he headed a department of medical physics in which I worked, and provided the means and the intellectual support needed for my first concentrated work on my version of control theory. Many parts of this theory were probably contributed by Bob Clark, and I've never properly acknowledged this in print. My first scientific paper on this theory was published in 1960 with Clark and MacFarland (who provided some official blessing as a psychologist).

From 1960 to 1973 I worked on electronic systems at Northwestern University's department of astronomy, finally producing a book called Behavior: The control of Perception. That book earned me some recognition, and circulated about for a few years until it eventually reached Bill Glasser, who seems to have been waiting for it. He'll tell you what happened next, as soon as I'm through here.

You'll probably want to know how control theory stands today in the world of competing scientific theories. I'd say it's just getting to its feet. During the past seven years I've been invited to speak at universities all over the country, to linguists, philosophers, anthropologists, sociologists, and even psychologists. Scientific journals seem quite willing to publish what I write on the subject. Especially among the younger people, students and faculty, there is a positive enthusiasm for control theory once the basic ideas are understood. All told I'd guess that there are now two or three hundred full-fledged life scientists who have accepted my approach and are at least rolling up their sleeves getting ready to start trying it out seriously.

In Philip Latham's wry words, the "grizzled veterans of a thousand seminars" still sit in the back rows and frown. I can't see any easy way to win them over. A lifetime of dedication to one point of view makes it hard to grasp a different one, much less accept it. I don't hold their reluctance or apprehension against them, because basically I agree that science shouldn't latch onto new ideas without a great deal of skepticism. Those of us who see the promise of control theory can be confident that its day is coming, but still a little more patience yet is needed.

One last word. I've found that most people take about two years to reach the point where they suddenly realize that they understand the basic concepts of control theory. It takes about a week for them to think they understand it. After the initial understanding, don't be dismayed if a host of questions and confusions arise; they always arise, because of beliefs that are in conflict with the principles of control theory, but which don't turn up until you encounter appropriate situations. Most of these confusions and questions will clear themselves up as you continue to think. The right answer always turns out to be the simplest one. Just keep returning to one basic principle: we control what we perceive, not what actually exists, and not what we do.

The meaning of that principle will grow deeper the longer you think of it, and the more situations you encounter in which it clearly holds true.

I'm beginning to lecture, and that's my signal to turn the floor over to the author. Tell them, Bill [Glasser].

William T. Powers
May 13, 1980

Date: Tue Feb 21, 1995 3:31 pm PST
Subject: CSG Videos, Glasser's book

[Dag Forssell (950221 1045)] >[Lars C. Smith (950219 19:00 CET)]

> In a previous post you mentioned Glasser's Stations of the Mind. Has there been any critique of the book on the net?

Lars,

Stations of the Mind has never been discussed on the net. I read it in 1983, so it has been a while. Glancing at it now, I notice that the major graphic is confusing, and Glasser talks of how we are driven by our needs. While Glasser parroted much of Powers, he never gave a clean presentation of PCT, but bent it from the beginning to support Reality Therapy. For this reason, the book can not be recommended.

However, Glasser's speculations about diseases of reorganization were/are somewhat interesting to me. They fall outside of what PCT can address with any confidence, but influence my thinking about possible consequences of living with chronic stress. I have seen close relatives live with heavy stress (in difficult relationships) and come down with autoimmune diseases or come up with far fetched accusations of abuse. I now see this as aspects of reorganization of both the body and the mind. While Glasser speculates and my experiences are anecdotal (and furthermore, my explanations to myself are guesses), it adds to my sense that PCT is very important. PCT shows us where stress comes from, and gives us hints of how to resolve it. Thus PCT helps us live healthy lives.

Since you have read B:CP (I did not until 1988), you can tell where Glasser bends PCT to conform to Reality Therapy and where he gives you heavy doses of speculation.

Best, Dag

Date: Thu Feb 23, 1995 8:22 pm PST
Subject: Discomforts (from Mary)

[from Mary Powers 9502.23]

I've been feeling uncomfortable about a few things that have recently appeared on the net. Maybe it would be best to simply ignore them, but silence here usually indicates acceptance.

1. Dag Forssell reprinting Bill's intro to Stations of the Mind:

O.K overall, but Glasser's later work shows that the paragraph "Glasser has been scrupulously careful..." was (sadly) over-optimistic. The "differences between his concepts and mine" turn out to be very important indeed. As Bill said to me a minute ago, "I thought he knew more than he did." Reproducing this intro may give the false impression that Glasser's books are a good introduction to PCT.

Mary P.

Date: Sun, 16 Apr 1995 08:49:00 EST
Subject: New View, indeed!

[From Greg Williams, Easter '95]

Ed Ford kindly sent me a copy, for the CSG Archive, of the new catalog (said to be going out to 50,000 addresses) from New View Publications (P.O. Box 3021, Chapel Hill, NC 27515, phone 800-441-3604). NV is now handling distribution of several books by PCTers.

What an Easter Resurrection -- Ideas I thought long moribund arising and gaining new life cloaked in the garb of others! But I'm getting ahead of the story ...

Judging by the NV catalog, somehow in gathering materials for the CSG Archive, I apparently managed to miss many publications related to organismic control. Maybe (I wondered at first) not THE control theory known and loved (or at

least debated) by all of those frequenting CSG-L -- but my doubts were put to rest when I read on page 2 of the NV catalog: "Control Theory is a theory of human motivation and behavior." OK, so they say there's really only one Control Theory (sorry I haven't been capitalizing the words; I stand corrected). Whew! Glad be set straight. I think.

Back to my lament. Somehow I managed to miss, among other Control Theory titles, Find Your Natural Weight the Nectar Way, by Judith McFadden, which NV says "applies the principles of Control Theory to help you look at your relationship with food." Funny that hasn't been talked about on the net. And I missed several Control Theory books by William Glasser (there was talk of a Glasser on the net, but the conclusion seemed to be that he didn't write books about real control theory (oops, Control Theory)); nevertheless, the William Glasser books in the NV catalog are claimed to be about Control Theory, so maybe I'd better check them out! I didn't miss yet another Control Theory book, Freedom from Stress by Ed Ford, in the same catalog section as the Glasser books. I know Ed's book is about real Control Theory (see, I'm learning about capitalization), since I helped edit its second edition; and since Ed's book is just across the gutter (no pun intended) from a couple of Glasser books in the NV catalog, how can there be any doubt that the Glasser books are about real Control Theory, too? But, on the other hand, I've never even heard of Robert and Laurie Sullo's Teach Them To Be Happy and I'm Learning To Be Happy, two more books "using the concepts of Control Theory." Why don't folks on the net spend some time discussing such interesting-sounding Control Theory works, instead of devoting so much time to arcane experimental psychology? (Hey, why beat up dead academics when you can laud living entrepreneurs? After all, it's the Republican Era!)

In the NV catalog, books originally published by CSG, as well as a new book by Dag Forssell, are under a separate "Control Systems Group" heading. I have seen all of these, but I am surprised that they are pitched as follows: "Anyone interested in the origins of Control Theory will find these books a useful addition to their knowledge." I personally have found the books of much greater than just historical interest, but maybe I'm biased, and I don't have a good idea of the probable reference signals of many in the NV catalog's target audience.

Enough |-

In all seriousness, where is the PCT policeman when we really need him? Occifer, is there a law against using the words "control theory" (OK, "Control Theory") without a license? Without an understanding? Without a clue? Oh, what's that? You say that New View is distributing your book? The catalog description of Mind Readings by Rick Marken says that it is about "Perceptual Control Theory." Well, that's the same as Control Theory, isn't it? Must be a good read ... just the thing to peruse in parallel with The Nectar Way?

Just one more |-> I apologize in advance to those easily offended. I find the cartoons on the front and back of the NV catalog highly appropriate: birds with black glasses on, looking at each other. The blind not even able to lead the blind? The irony is in the cartoon's caption: "We Apply Control Theory to Real Life." (Not trademarked -- an oversight?)

Yours for truth in advertising.

As ever (back to lurkdom),

Greg

Date: Sun, 16 Apr 1995 11:47:44 -0600
Subject: Re: misc stuff

[From Bill Powers (950416.1045 MDT)]

Greg Williams (Easter '95) --

I haven't seen the whole New View catalogue yet. The juxtapositions do sound rather odd.

I comfort myself with the knowledge that many people who have come to PCT started out by reading Glasser's stuff and wondering where it came from. Those who don't wonder aren't very likely to come our way anyhow, so I don't think we are losing anything.

The Dumbing of America continues. When you simplify things so everybody can understand them, you raise a new generation which considers today's easy stuff to be the hard stuff, and they simplify some more for the next generation that complains that it's too hard, and so it goes.

Best, Bill P.

Date: Sun, 16 Apr 1995 12:25:58 -0700
Subject: Re: New View, indeed!

[From Rick Marken (950416.1220)]

(Greg Williams, Easter '95) --

> Somehow I managed to miss, among other Control Theory titles, _Find Your Natural Weight the Nectar Way_, by Judith McFadden

I haven't seen the catalog yet but thanks for the tip; I'm going to order that one first;-)

> Funny that hasn't been talked about on the net.

Haven't I mentioned how I found my natural weight using prune juice?

> In all seriousness, where is the PCT policeman when we really need him?

I'm only in it for the money;-) See below.

> I apologize in advance to those easily offended.

You sure don't have to apologize to me; I thought your comments were right on target!

I have only one excuse: money. The four "real" PCT books that were beautifully published by you as CSG Press (LCS I & II, IMP, & MR) have not made a penny -- or, at least, not many pennies. That means that there has been a lot of unpaid, high quality work (by the authors AND by you). I think there is virtually no chance that these books will "pay-off" by becoming part of the academic curriculum in the near future, unless we manage to pass PCT off as an just another theory of behavior -- a strategy, up with which I will not put. Therefore, I was (and am) in favor of listing with NV because there's an audience of people who might at least pay for these books.

I have no illusions that all the people who buy PCT books through NV will read them or, if they do, that they will understand them. I just wanted the authors (and, in my case, I just wanted you -- who was carrying a rather large debt against my book) to get paid. Yes, I am cynically taking advantage of the acceptance of "control theory" (even if it's not "real" control theory) by the NV readership. But there is always the chance that we will reach one or two people who will not only buy the PCT books but will understand them as well. There is no chance of this at all if no one is buying the books.

Happy Easter Rick

Date: Mon, 17 Apr 1995 06:26:00 EST
Subject: Re: New View, indeed

[From Greg Williams (day after Easter '95)]

Interesting how arguments about purity on behalf of one's cause become diluted when personal financial gain is involved, isn't it? I've thought I've noted a double standard regarding purity among some PCTers in the past, but this is the first time it seems economically motivated.

As ever, Greg

Date: Mon, 17 Apr 1995 11:02:00 EST
Subject: More New View

[From Greg Williams (day after Easter '95 - II)]

>Bill Powers (950416.1045 MDT)

>I haven't seen the whole New View catalogue yet.

So you didn't preview the representation of "Control Theory" in the catalog?

> The juxtapositions do sound rather odd.

I would prefer the word "misleading."

> I comfort myself with the knowledge that many people who have come to PCT started out by reading Glasser's stuff and wondering where it came from. Those who don't wonder aren't very likely to come our way anyhow, so I don't think we are losing anything.

Nothing except our credibility, perhaps.

> The Dumbing of America continues. When you simplify things so everybody can understand them, you raise a new generation which considers today's easy stuff to be the hard stuff, and they simplify some more for the next generation that complains that it's too hard, and so it goes.

I hope that PCTers won't be contributing to the Dumbing by ignoring the problem, selectively.

As ever, Greg

Date: Mon, 17 Apr 1995 09:52:38 -0700
Subject: PCT Purity, Anticipation

[From Rick Marken (950417.0950)]

Greg Williams (day after Easter '95) --

> Interesting how arguments about purity on behalf of one's cause become diluted when personal financial gain is involved, isn't it?

I don't know if I have ever argued for "purity" on behalf of my "cause" (it sounds a bit scary when you put it that way). I am interested in people getting the basic ideas of PCT right but this is not a "purity" issue; it's a factual issue. For example, control systems select and control the consequences of their actions; that's a fact. The consequences of actions do not select the actions of a control systems; also a fact. People who think that "selection by consequences" is consistent with control theory don't have "impure" thoughts; they have incorrect thoughts.

Perhaps you are saying that listing PCT books along with books that misrepresent PCT (like many of those in the NV catalog) is impure. Perhaps it is-- but I have never argued against this kind of impurity. Heck, I would be for listing the PCT books in the MIT Press catalog even though this would be impure too because most of the books in that catalog that even deal with control theory present a mistaken view of how to apply the theory to behavior.

> I've thought I've noted a double standard regarding purity among some PCTers in the past, but this is the first time it seems economically motivated.

What double standard? And what's wrong with economic motivation? I like it when people get paid for doing what I consider good work. PCT science is VERY good work; what's wrong with wanting people to be able to eat while they do their work?

On that note, I would like to say that I am sorry that the PCT books published by CSG Press did not sell a LOT better. I think they would have if all of the PCT people currently teaching in academic settings had assigned those books as textbooks. PCT people teaching intro classes should have used "Intro to Modern Psychology" as the text. PCT people teaching research methods classes should have assigned "Mind Readings" as a supplement to Phil Runkel's "Casting Nets..." text. Living Control Systems I and II should have been required in all classes. This can (and should) still be done -- but it wasn't (at least, not on a large enough scale) so we had to look for another way to sell the books. Indeed, I don't understand how a PCTer in academia could, in good conscience, assign anything other than a PCT text in any class.

If you want to get mad at someone for the fact that we have decided to list the CSG books in the NV catalog, why not get mad at all the academic PCTers who could have been making bulk orders of all the CSG Press books for the last five (seven?) years?

Best Rick

Date: Mon, 17 Apr 1995 18:35:00 EST
Subject: No sympathy for _any_ devils!

[From Greg Williams (day after Easter '95 - III)]

>From Rick Marken (950417.0950)

> If you want to get mad at someone for the fact that we have decided to list the CSG books in the NV catalog

I'm not mad about that decision (after all, I got an emptied -- of books -- office and a new computer out of the deal), but I will be mad if everybody just shrugs off how the NV catalog treats PCT and some quite different ideas as all-of-a-piece "Control Theory." After myriad complaints down the years on CSG-L about R. Beer, Carver and Scheier, various control engineers and human factors researchers, conventional psychologists, popular-press authors, etc., etc. not getting their PCT-facts straight, silence about the NV catalog's representation of Control Theory would surely beg the question from anyone so heavily critiqued: I wonder how much I'd have to pay for them to stop criticizing me?

You could do much more than simply criticize the NV catalog. You could try to influence future catalogs and other publicity. Maybe you could even set some of the NV folks straight on the facts of living control systems. Then you wouldn't be on the devils' payroll. ;-

As ever, Greg

Date: Mon, 17 Apr 1995 22:17:04 -0700
Subject: Sympathy for the Devil

[From Rick Marken (950417.2215)]

Greg Williams (day after Easter '95 - III) --

> After myriad complaints down the years on CSG-L about R. Beer, Carver and Scheier, various control engineers and human factors researchers, conventional psychologists, popular-press authors, etc., etc. not getting their PCT-facts straight, silence about the NV catalog's representation

of Control Theory would surely beg the question from anyone so heavily critiqued: I wonder how much I'd have to pay for them to stop criticizing _me_?

I am certainly not reserving my criticism of the books in the NV catalog; I just haven't read any of them (that I know of; still no catalog). I criticized the works you mention above because they are about topics where I think I have some expertise. I have certainly criticized Glasser's work on the net. The other works you mentioned (like the "nectar" book) are probably not even worth criticizing.

As far as the credibility implications of having "real" PCT books sitting in the NV catalog; first, I think the credibility of PCT should depend only on the demos, experiments and models that we make available to anyone who is interested; second, to the extent that PCT credibility does depend on the company it keeps, then the quality of the company is in the eye of the beholder and there's not much anyone can do about that; the books that are one person's "quality company" are another's embarrassment. I, for example, consider my "Mind Readings" book to be one of the best (and most "real") PCT books around; but it nearly always appears in "official" lists of recommended PCT readings along with books that, I think, reduce its credibility. So I have already had to deal with the NV problem. I bet my list of the books that DON'T reduce the credibility of my book is a lot shorter than yours (not often you'll hear a guy say that, eh;-)

Best Rick

Date: Tue, 18 Apr 1995 06:58:00 EST
Subject: Anticipating police activity

[From Greg Williams (950418)]

> I am certainly not reserving my criticism of the books in the NV catalog

Great! I hope that you will continue to act in ways tending to dispel impressions that the PCT-incorrect might be able to buy relief from your critiques. How about some comments on the net when you've had a chance to peruse the NV catalog (especially with regard to how the devils might be wrong about the PCT facts of life)?

Go to it, officer! I am pleased to hear that you are above taking a bribe, and I look forward to your police actions in support of that claim.

As ever, Greg

Date: Wed, 19 Apr 1995 09:04:34 -0700
Subject: New View

[From Rick Marken (950419.0900)]

Greg --

The New View catalog has arrived! I like the colors and the birdies are cute. A more detailed critique will be forthcoming.

Best Rick

Date: Thu, 20 Apr 1995 12:03:57 -0700
Subject: New View Review

[From Rick Marken (950420.1200)]

The New View catalog begins with the following definition of Control Theory:

> Control theory is a theory of human motivation and behavior...Control theory is based on the belief that motivation comes from within

ourselves. We are always behaving to meet the five basic needs of love, power, fun, freedom and survival.

What is missing from this definition is any mention that control theory is about controlling. Without this, the definition is misleading at best. The belief that motivation comes from within ourselves is certainly not unique to control theory; what is unique is the idea that purposive human behavior involves the control of perceptual consequences of action. The stuff about "love, power, fun..." is, of course, nonsense and should be deleted.

I think a catalog of books on Control Theory should include an accurate description of both the theory AND what the theory is about: control.

The catalog then list 10 reasons for using control theory. I take serious exception to at least two of these purported reasons:

> 4. To gain more effective control of your class, your job and yourself

I think the last thing PCT would suggest is that you would want to get in control of a class (of kids) or of yourself. The whole point of PCT is that conflict results when one control system tries to control another control system (even when that other control system is in yourself). One reason for learning PCT is that it explains the difference between things that you can control and those you can't. People who try to control people (including themselves) just don't understand that human behavior happens to be one of the things you can't control; you can't control controllers.

> 5. To teach personal responsibility

You can't teach a control system personal responsibility; it simple IS responsible for the state of the variables it is controlling. It is NOT responsible for the state of variables it is NOT controlling, even if it has an effect on those variables. So you can't teach a control system to be responsible for what it is not responsible for. "Teaching responsibility" is similar to "holding people responsible" or "giving them responsibility". PCT shows that responsibility can be taken, but it can't be given away. A good reason to learn PCT is so that one can see what responsibility IS -- and so that one can tell the difference between behaviors (results of actions) for which a person is responsible and those for which he is not.

The catalog contains a whole lot of books that I will probably never read. But I have no problem with the fact that good PCT books are listed along with books of lesser quality. I DO have a problem with the definition of control theory and some of the reasons given for learning control theory. But perhaps we can work with New View to find a way of describing control theory and the reasons for learning it that are both accurate and intelligible to a lay audience.

Best Rick

Date: Fri, 21 Apr 1995 06:10:00 EST
Subject: Re: New View Review

Thanks, officer!

As ever,

Greg Williams [940421]

Date: Thu, 27 Apr 1995 22:03:16 -0600
Subject: Predictive stimuli, etc.

[From Bill Powers (950427.1720 MDT)]

I'll be catching up for a few days, a little at a time.

Greg Williams (day after Easter '95 - II)--

RE: New View catalog and PCT credibility

As Mary said, the term "control theory" is in the public domain. I'm uncomfortable with having PCT appearing in the middle of all that other stuff, mostly because Glasser is grabbing credit for a half-hearted attempt to incorporate PCT into his own work. On the other hand, I don't want to be in the position of saying that nobody but the Central Committee has a right to think about control theory and its applications to human nature; that would be a little too much like the way that Glasser passes on the purity of anyone who aspires to be a Reality Therapist. I'm happy that a bunch of people who haven't been exposed to anything but Glasser's version will now see that there is more to it, and will have access to another kind of source materials.

In any group of people hearing about PCT for the first time, there will be some who become intrigued and look further into it. Those are the people who eventually join the effort. This happens in all venues, whether "respectable" or not; in fact, my impression is that it is more likely to happen when the audience has no prior stake in some antithetical belief system.

> I hope that PCTers won't be contributing to the Dumbing [of America] by ignoring the problem, selectively.

Before we can explain how PCT applies to human behavior, we have to have somebody listening. I trust you're not suggesting that any of the authors would tailor their explanations with an eye to increasing book sales rather than making sure the basic ideas were understood correctly. I know that when I proposed writing a book called something like "Sex, Violence, and Riches through PCT" I did not get an enthusiastic response from my colleagues.

I echo Rick's remarks in one regard: it doesn't do much for book sales when professors call me up asking if they can Xerox a chapter from one of my books for a class to use.

That's enough for tonight -- more tomorrow.

Best to all, Bill P.

Date: Fri, 28 Apr 1995 06:40:00 EST
Subject: Dumbing down

[From Greg Williams (950428)]

I deleted Bill Powers' come-back post in which he replies to my comments on the NVP catalog awhile back, so I don't have his exact text. But he was considering the possibility that I might be accusing CSG authors of contributing to the dumbing down of Americans [and others :-)] by thinking about writing watered-down literature. In reply, no, I don't think CSG authors (those currently known to me, at least) would want to do that. What I meant about PCTers potentially contributing to the dumbing down is that if we don't speak out about misleading and incorrect (to use Rick's term) presentations of "all one Control Theory" (as in the NVP catalog), we will be part of the problem. I am still hoping that the CSG authors represented in the NVP catalog will work with NVP staff to remedy the problem. I can see no excuse for complacency about future NVP publicity given the incorrectness regarding Control Theory in the catalog. Bill Williams has suggested to me that the authors might not care much about that incorrectness because it doesn't pose a threat to their references, and I agree that it doesn't. But I'm talking about a threat to the perceived (by outsiders) integrity of PCTers if they are seen as accepting and even being associated with such dumbing down as is promoted by NVP.

As ever, Greg

Date: Fri, 28 Apr 1995 15:30:16 -0600
Subject: Misc catching up

[From Bill Powers (950427.1038 MDT)] Continuing catchup --

Greg Williams (day after Easter '95 - III) --

> After myriad complaints down the years on CSG-L about R. Beer, Carver and Scheier, various control engineers and human factors researchers, conventional psychologists, popular-press authors, etc., etc. not getting their PCT-facts straight, silence about the NV catalog's representation of Control Theory would surely beg the question from anyone so heavily critiqued: I wonder how much I'd have to pay for them to stop criticizing _me_?

There is nothing in the New View catalog amounting to misrepresentations of the PCT view. Such things may exist inside the pages of books presented for sale there; when they come up I expect we will offer our usual criticisms of them. What I have read of these publications (not much) leaves me with the feeling of seeing a kindergarten version of a grown-up subject, not serious proposals about human nature that call for comment one way or the other. I don't feel any vigilante's urge to cruise around looking for violations of PCT ideas, although I'm perfectly happy to take a stand when challenged. When I get my own copy of the catalogue I may have some comments to make to the Goods. But I'll make up my own mind, thanks.

You imply that I have sold out my scientific integrity in return for the promise of increased book sales; that anyone who could come up with my price could get me to withhold criticism. If that's your assessment of my character after our ten years of acquaintance, I'd say you need more practice in making judgments.

I'm up to the 21st and saturated. Until next time.

Best to all, Bill P.

Date: Sat, 29 Apr 1995 07:27:00 EST
Subject: Perceived integrity

[From Greg Williams (950429)]

I didn't delete this one. Reorganization works!

>Bill Powers (950427.1038 MDT)

> You imply that I have sold out my scientific integrity in return for the promise of increased book sales; that anyone who could come up with my price could get me to withhold criticism. If that's your assessment of my character after our ten years of acquaintance, I'd say you need more practice in making judgments.

I have been trying to say that if you and the other CSG authors with books in the NVP catalog are complacent about NV's characterization of "Control Theory," it won't surprise me if some other scientists -- who do not enjoy my benefit of long personal acquaintance with your high standards of scientific integrity -- perceive that the scientific integrity of some PCTers is for sale and even generalize that the scientific integrity of PCTers generally is low. It matters not what I believe to be the case; what matters is whether non-PCT scientists becoming interested in PCT are "turned off" because of their beliefs about the scientific integrity of PCTers -- beliefs influenced by NVP publicity.

It is certainly reasonable for you to act indignantly about even the slightest hint that someone might think PCT scientists can be bought after seeing the NVP catalog -- but I hope you also will act to defuse even the slightest hint that such is the case. Having good models isn't going to matter to someone who doesn't even look at the models because he or she thinks PCT appears, as per NVP publicity, akin to the many self-help systems being hawked far and wide. Sure, a

class act is occasionally discovered in a dive. But only occasionally, because most of the talent scouts are uptown. Those undiscovered class acts on the wrong side of the tracks aren't any less classy, just undiscovered.

When you make up your own mind on this, I hope you will consider those who know little about your mind. You can press on regardless (that is, be complacent about NVP advertising), but in my opinion, that could slow the acceptance of PCT significantly. I believe that from our long acquaintance you appreciate my passionate commitment to aiding that acceptance, even if it sometimes requires disturbing you.

As ever, Greg

Date: Sat, 29 Apr 1995 16:58:12 -0700
Subject: NVP Science

[From Rick Marken (950429.1700)]

Greg Williams (950429)--

> what matters is whether non-PCT scientists becoming interested in PCT are "turned off" because of their beliefs about the scientific integrity of PCTers -- beliefs influenced by NVP publicity.

I don't think many scientists will come into contact with PCT via NVP. I suppose, then, that your main concern is the scientist who gets interested in PCT via articles in academic publications and journals and subsequently gets "turned off" when he discovers that PCT is advertised in NVP. But I don't think there is much chance that such a scientist would have ever gotten PCT anyway. If his main concern is fitting into the scientific establishment then NVP will be the LEAST of his problems with PCT.

Best Rick

Date: Sun, 30 Apr 1995 06:44:00 EST
Subject: Just talk, or actions too?

[From Greg Williams (940430)]

>Rick Marken (950429.1700)

> I don't think many scientists will come into contact with PCT via NVP. I suppose, then, that your main concern is the scientist who gets interested in PCT via articles in academic publications and journals and subsequently gets "turned off" when he discovers that PCT is advertised in NVP. But I don't think there is much chance that such a scientist would have ever gotten PCT anyway.

So, do you or don't you plan to work with NVP staff to improve future catalogs with regard to the shortcomings in the current catalog (as noted in a recent post by you)?

As ever, Greg

Date: Mon, 1 May 1995 08:54:57 -0700
Subject: NVP

[From Rick Marken (950501.0850)]

Greg Williams (940430) --

> So, do you or don't you plan to work with NVP staff to improve future catalogs with regard to the shortcomings in the current catalog

Of course.

Best Rick

Date: Wed, 3 May 1995 22:40:03 -0700
Subject: State of the Art

[From Rick Marken (950503.2240)]

While we're on the subject of control models that don't control, I received the Spring, 1995 MIT Press catalog of books on Cognition, Brain & Behavior. In there we find books that present the State of the Art on, what else -- cognition, brain and behavior. The MIT catalog gives us the books that represent the state of the art in modelling living systems. And here they are: A new book (1995) called "Cognitive Science" that "surveys the theories and empirical results of cognitive science within a consistent computational perspective" (computed output, anyone?). Or how about three new books on the "dynamical approach to cognition". One, by Kelso, "extends the physical concepts of self-organization and the mathematical tools of non-linear dynamics to understand how human beings perceive, intend, learn, control and coordinate complex behaviors" (trendy attractors, anyone?).

It's a pretty grim catalog, overall. Very little on behavior as the control of perception. I rank it well below the New View catalog in scientific quality.

But wait. Nestled near the back, in the section on "Complex adaptive systems" we find "A comparative approach to cognitive science" edited by H. Roitblat and J-A Meyer. Among the contributors is one W. T Bourbon; PCT noses it's way into the mainstream! And right next to that listing is one for "Intelligent behavior in animals and robots" by McFarland and Bosser. This book explores the "novel insight" that animals and robots "can be analyzed as multi-task autonomous control systems". If that gets your heart pounding, wait 'til you read the next part of the description: "In defining intelligent behavior, what matters is the behavioral outcome, not the nature of the mechanism by which the outcome is achieved". Is this a book about behavior as the control of perception? Inquiring minds want to know -- but, with a list price of \$39.95, inquiring minds won't know until their lazy bodies manage to get them to the library. This book was apparently reviewed favorably by Randall Beer. Could Dr. Beer have become a control theorist since "abandoning the conversation" on csg-1 a couple years ago?

Has anyone read "Intelligent behavior in animals and robots"? Are McFarland, Borrer and Beer PCTers without portfolio?

Best Rick