From Object to Image to Object

Harwood Fisher

Received January 30, 1975

Images are mental representations accommodated by grammatical structures. These structures order sensori-input of information as well as provide for articulated ways of expressing motor sequences associated with images. The psychological process of perception is reflected in the development of paradigmatic structures. The psychological process of action (behavior and its mental representations) is reflected in the development of syntagmatic structures. Forming and expressing imagery requires both paradigmatic and syntagmatic structuring. The former relates to logical issues of identity of objects and to the formation of concepts. The latter relates to the solution of psycho-logical questions of causality through articulation of grammatical roles in sentences. Two issues affecting the formation of a model to account for imagery are examined: (1) The tendency to explain imagery as a result of motor sequences and to utilize performance grammar. (2) The impact of ontogenesis on social processes affecting the logical and psycho-logical concerns facing the person at different stages of development. The grammar of imagery is seen as broader than one of performance. The epistemology of imagemaking does not reflect a linear ontogenetic development which precludes attention to problems of creating the logical structures of an object.

PURPOSE AND ORGANIZATION

The purpose of this article is to present a model of image formation and expression and to therein account for linguistic structures affecting three processes: perception, performance, and communication. In pursuing this purpose, a critical analysis will view the assumptions involved in limiting an account of imagery to a model of performance.

This article is organized in five sections. The first states the basic concepts, issues, and processes involved in the image as perception as well as

1City College of the City University of New York, New York, New York.
performance. The second section describes the structure of an image in terms of the problems of formation and expression. The third section identifies four basic problems with performance models of an image and discusses these problems in terms of developmental psychology. The fourth section focuses on the basic dimensions of an image as perception. And the fifth section describes the effects of sharing image formation with others.

IMAGE AS PERCEPTION AND PERFORMANCE

From Percept to Expression: A Definition of Terms

An image is formed and expressed as an abstraction from reality. Sometimes an image is as vivid as an eidetic remembrance and sometimes it is exotic like a lost symbol of a forgotten civilization. When different images are compared, several levels of distance from a referent may be discerned. That we may form an image in thought or forge it in coin attests both to differing levels of abstraction and to different stages of mental and behavioral processes. There is a relation between certain psychological processes (mental and behavioral) and the acts of speech and display of language by which images are formed and expressed. That relation may be described in terms of the structures which account for image formation and production. It is the purpose of this article to explore these structures.

The thesis will be advanced that psychological processes of sensori-input (perception) and motor sequence (action) may be reflected in structures which affect logical and psycho-logical questions in image making. These structures in particular are those of paradigms and syntagmas. Paradigms are organizational structures ordering perceptions. Syntagmas are organizational structures which introduce serial order in speech and language. For the person to form and express the imagery ordered by these structures, he must develop both word meanings and sentence grammar. The interrelation between mental and behavioral processes and the structures of speech and language may be expressed as a progression. The steps in this progression, by which images are formed and expressed, include the following: formation of paradigms, action, interiorization of action schemata, adaptation of syntagmas, and the use of language. It may be helpful at the outset to clarify these terms and to picture the way an image progresses from a new form to an articulated expression. An image is a mental representation abstracted from some information. Therefore, the first step in forming an image is to receive information, say, as sensori-input. For a variety of reasons, some having to do with retention and