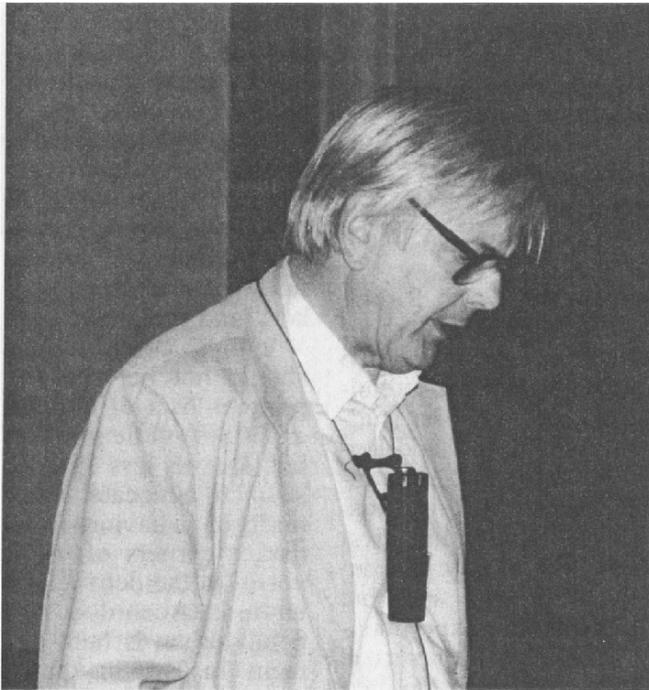


## *In Memoriam*

Ullin Place: 1924–2000

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Ullin presenting at the First European Meeting on the Experimental Analysis of Behaviour in Liege, 1983. Photograph by Jack Michael.

Ullin Place would be touched, and perhaps surprised, could he know the depth of the emotion evoked in members of the behavior analysis community by news of his death on January 2. The invariable reaction has been one of personal loss, not mere professional regret. Everyone recalls him as gentle,

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For the biographical details of Ullin's life I am indebted to his son, Thomas Place, his widow, Peggy Place, to Harry Lewis, University of Leeds, and especially to Elizabeth Valentine, Royal Holloway, University of London, whose help has been unstinting and invaluable.

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courteous, and modest, someone who would talk as earnestly to an undergraduate as to a distinguished colleague. He was single-minded in his pursuit of an objective understanding of human nature, and it is a credit to our field that this pursuit brought him to behavior analysis rather than to one of the myriad seductive alternatives available to him. His dedication to the field was evident; he published tirelessly and attended behavioral conferences regularly, both in England and abroad, at considerable personal expense.

Many knew that Ullin was an intellectual hybrid, both a philosopher and

a psychologist, but who knew that he was a famous man in his other chosen field, with his own entry in *Who's Who in the World?* None of us did, and Ullin never brought it up. In 1956 he authored the paper, "Is Consciousness a Brain Process?," a question he answered in the affirmative. Although the article had been written originally for an audience of psychologists, it became highly influential in philosophy and is widely credited with initiating the modern approach to the mind-body problem, at least among English-speaking philosophers. To date, the paper has been reprinted nine times in anthologies of important papers in philosophy, and it has appeared in translation as well.

Ullin was born in the North Riding district of Yorkshire in 1924, a descendant of Margaret Fell, one of the two founders of the Quaker sect. He attended Rugby and Oxford, where he studied psychology, philosophy, and anthropology. Here he came under the influence of the philosophers Ryle, Austin, and Grice. He took his first academic job at the University of Adelaide in Australia, where it is said that he set up that school's first experimental psychology laboratory. He returned to England in 1954 and spent the next 28 years variously practicing clinical psychology and lecturing in both philosophy and psychology, mainly at the University of Leeds. Ullin's interests were extraordinarily broad, but he honed each interest to perfection. He is said to have been an amateur archaeologist, with a detailed knowledge of the history and landmarks of his native Yorkshire. He raised sheep and was an expert on wild mushrooms.

He retired, nominally, in 1982, but this merely marked the beginning of a very active period of lecturing, traveling, and writing. (In just three years before his final illness he published 25 papers and abstracts!) He soon made the acquaintance of American behaviorists and began attending annual conventions of the Association for Behavior

Analysis (ABA) with his delightful wife, Peggy.

His publications span four distinct topics in philosophy and psychology, but his primary contributions to behavior analysis were his articles on language. Perhaps his most influential papers are those that argue that the sentence is a coherent unit of verbal behavior, but only when defined, not in the formal terms of the linguist, but according to elements of the three-term contingency, a position he called "behavioral contingency semantics." He mingled in intellectual spheres far from mainstream behavior analysis and consequently introduced fresh ideas into our field. Among other contributions, he pointed out the relevance of the fields of conversation analysis, speech acts, and pragmatics.

Ullin's contributions to our field should not be measured in inches of print or lists of citations. Other influences are subtle and harder to quantify, but are no less important. He was a staunch advocate, and he carried the torch of behaviorism into some of the darker corners of the intellectual universe, to the detriment of his own reputation. (According to Mecca Chiesa, behaviorism is held in even lower esteem in Britain than in the United States!) Ullin felt that his career had suffered from his unflinching defense of a position many regarded as anathema. Such advocacy is surely important, for it plants seeds of doubt in every critic: "If a man like Ullin Place exalts behaviorism, perhaps I have overlooked something." Most of us just talk to one another; Ullin talked to everyone.

He was the quintessential Englishman. He spoke precisely, elegantly, and eruditely, but with an understated sense of humor that sneaked up on the listener. (In a learned disquisition on trends in behavior analysis, he referred to selectionism as "the flavor of the month.") At the annual ABA convention he often presented highly original papers to small but select audiences in a droll, inimitable style. His imperturb-

ability is revealed in two anecdotes told by Harry Lewis, a colleague at the University of Leeds. A mischievous student had somehow acquired a hand grenade, and he delighted in the tumult that invariably erupted when he tossed it into the office of a faculty member. He was deflated by Ullin, who, when his turn came, merely glanced up, noticed that the pin had not been drawn, and returned to work, leaving the student shuffling awkwardly outside his door wondering how to retrieve his grenade. On another occasion, his clinical expertise was called into play. A student was being persecuted by ghosts and approached Ullin for advice. Because the student was going abroad for a year, and feared that the spirits would follow, he badly needed an exorcist. According to Lewis, Ullin listened "with characteristic unflappability and professional suspension of judgment."

In late 1998, Ullin discovered that he would soon die of lung cancer. He responded to the news with redoubled effort and not a trace of self-pity. To the contrary, he made ambitious plans to assemble his papers in several coherent sets to be published posthumously, and he recruited friends and colleagues as intellectual executors, should he be cut off before he succeeded. His letters during this period were remarkable for their objectivity and businesslike tone. He spoke of the likely approach of a mental decline as though he were speaking of an impending rainstorm—a nuisance, but something that one just has to work around. In fact, he worked indefatigably until within a fortnight of his death.

The first of his posthumous papers, "The Role of the Hand in the Evolution of Language," was published in the January 23 edition of the on-line journal, *Psycoloquy*. Charlie Catania helped shepherd this paper to publication and will respond to the peer commentary in Ullin's stead. Several similar projects are in progress, and it is likely that Ullin's hopes for his intellectual estate will be realized.

I first met Ullin at a conference held

in a quaint inn perched on the side of a steep hill above Bad Kreuznach, Germany. I was sitting in the beer garden of the inn, where we were wont to gather of an afternoon, when Ullin and Peggy, bedecked in safari outfits, came puffing up the hill on ancient three-speed bicycles. Ullin tinkled the bell on his handlebars and waved us a cheery hello, then struggled onward. Phil Hineline leaned over to me and whispered, "There will always be an England!" Even so. But there will never be another Ullin Place.

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