Language of Day to Day Economics

OR

“What is the sound of falling prices?”
Goals of the Application

- Day-to-day activities
- Adaptation in motives over time
- Relationship between simple acts and broader social changes
Commodification

- When economic value is assigned to something not previously considered as salable.

- Examples:
  - Advertising commodifies information about products
  - Copyright commodifies communicative content
  - Cadillacs, Gucci bags, Rolex watches commodify status
  - How do we commodify news on the web? How do we package it so it can be sold?
  - How can I package my expertise so it can be sold?

- Our economic story is the story of inventing ways to commodify
Habermas’ Two Worlds

- **Lifeworld**
  - World of human interaction
  - World of “subject”: things meaningful w/i complex of relationships with other people

- **Technical World**
  - World of tool manipulation; “how to”
  - World of “objects”: things meaningful as we dominate and control them

- **Jürgen Habermas:**
  - *In modernity the technical world has colonized our lifeworld.*
On modern life

- Americans have changed how we do our day-to-day life to isolate ourselves more
  - Achieved by expanding technical world
  - Shopping is a primary way
  - Language of shopping today is a language which separates us from others rather than integrating with them into community

- Shopping today features *scripts*

- Trip to Supermarket
Barter Economy

• Court Day
  o Market: “A public gathering held for buying and selling merchandise”

• Language of Barter
  o Ongoing relationship w/ neighbors; rich talk of everyday life
  o Discourse of exchange: “I need . . .”; “I have . . .”
  o Product was there to hold, to handle
  o Barter; no price
  o No advertising
Craft Economy

- Over time, expertise is commodified
- Goods in specialties
- Language of craft
  - Communication based narrowly on craft
  - Discourse of exchange: Offer of craft
  - Discourse of product: language of quality
  - Product an extension of the Craftsman
  - Now cash economy; but quality not P was key
  - Advertising grows “I have available in my shop . . .”
Advertisement in Virginia Gazette, 1767

MADE and SOLD by the subscribers, in NORFOLK,

HARD SOAP,

EQUAL in quality to any made in New York or Philadelphia, by the box, containing from 40 to 100 lb. each, at 6 d. a pound, or in smaller quantities at 7 d. halfpenny; and CANDLES, as good, if not superior, to any made on the continent. Tallow purchased in large or small quantities, with goods or cash.

ARMSTON & BURDETT.
The undersigned, in making their acknowledgements for the liberal patronage they have received, and in expression of their gratification at the encomiums their instruments have received from the discriminating public, take pleasure in announcing that in addition to their usual supply of from 6 to 7 octave square PIANOS, they have commenced the manufacture of GRAND PIANOS. In accordance with the suggestion of eminent Professors and amateur musicians, who have felt the necessity of having an establishment where they can have a GRAND PIANO made by good and efficient workmen under their own supervision, and in whom they have confidence; we have finished the first instrument of the kind, which has been used at Mr. Knoop's Concert in Baltimore and Washington . . . possesses advantages which gives it the preference with the eminent musicians of this country and Europe. . . .
Interlocking Business Community

• Craftsmen give way to factories; shopping becomes retail
• Communities of merchants and professionals bought from each other
• Language of IBC
  - Rich with a general community discourse
    ▪ Language of family; a public space
  - Discourse of Exchange: description based in narrative of use
  - Assurance of quality was community relationship
  - Advertising: branding emerges
Arrival of Brands in IBC
Super-market Economy

- Large stores featuring broad range of products and brands
- Competition based on P
- Language of super market retailing
  - Minimal circle of communication focused on transaction
  - Discourse of exchange: fast bonding
    - No relationship with merchant
  - Discourse of product: brand name & features
  - Quality reduced to warranty & guarantee
  - Advertising features brand and P
Supermarket Advertising

Supermarket poster:
- Grand reopening of Silver Spring location.
- Specials include:
  - Frozen Turkey Breast: $4.99
  - Diced Ham: $5.99
  - Fresh Salmon Fillet: $3.99
- Double coupons up to 99 cents!

Weekly specials poster:
- Specials include:
  - Large Iceberg Lettuce: $1.99
  - Extra Fancy Gala Apples: $0.88
  - Imported Naval Oranges: $0.88
- Your choice 10 for $10 sale!
  - Items include:
    - Chicken Drumsticks
    - Tomatoes
    - Pinto Beans
    - Cinnamon Rolls
- More 10 for $10 savings!
Internet Shopping

- Today we order online
- What is the language of internet shopping?
  - Communication is about?
  - Decision points (info)?
  - Advertising?

Buying Kindle
Evolving Language of Shopping

- Shopping out of lifeworld into technical
- Economy of consumption r/t production
- Our discourse of shopping narrow & sterile
- Against it: signs of our nostalgia for lifeworld economics
What have we just done? How did we analysis Motives for Shopping

• **Focus is on the *language* of shopping**
  1. What is the *talk about* as the transaction evolves? Supplemented with advertising
  2. Isolate vocabulary & texture of comm & lang
     ○ Don’t look thru the language as if it were not there!

• **Focus on how transaction *performed***
  1. How is prdt described? Is it described? Is prdt the focus?
  2. What are the decision pts? How is prdt evaluated? Other focus?
  3. Conceptualize justification/motive for selection
     ○ Texture of action *using* language in performance
     ○ Variety of ways things get done *with words*
Analysis of Motives for Shopping

- Look also, h/e, for how comty getting done
  - Movement from lots of community getting done to very little
  - In barter & craft, product is a contribution to community; talk about product celebrates that contribution
  - In IBC, interaction is the service provided, link to the IBC
  - In super-mkt and internet, little community; technical information
  - Use historical screen to see changes in motive

- Using new mode of analysis: *lifeworld* and *technical world*
  - “Shopping has become a technical skill”
Analysis of Motives for Shopping

- What is the “stuff” you analyze?
  - Communication, language, action

- How you analyze it is key
  - Meaning (Comm & lang) is not referential; comm & lang enacts shopping
  - Focus is on comty, not individual
  - Motivation symbolic: Motivation evolved; comm & lang evolved
  - In comm & lang, shopping is per-formed

- You need to master the “how” as well as the “what”