

AUTHOR COMMENTS ON THE REVIEWS BY CLOWARD AND RAKOS

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Cloward's objections are rooted in philosophical issues and appear to hinge on differing assumptions about the fundamental nature of man and about the validity of the deterministic perspective. Rakos, on the other hand, constructs his objections around strategic and tactical issues in presenting the work.

Reactions to Cloward's Review

Cloward refers to some interesting social history, but I think that much of it lacks the relevance that he supposes. From a natural science point of view all behavior is totally controlled, so total control is the only state in which an organism ever exists. There is no existence for any organism outside of the functional relations that bind every entity, organic or inorganic, to its environment.

The felon, sentenced to prison, has always been under total behavior control exerted by the natural world, and will remain so continuously throughout life. Only the kind of control is at issue. The person's criminal repertoire has resulted from the controls prevailing in the sub-culture in which the person has dwelt. Different controls will lead to different behaviors—theoretically, in the case of corrections to more socially tolerable forms. Thus, a behaviorologist contemplates only the arrangements by which to change the nature of the controls on behavior. In imposing controls on behavior we substitute deliberate controls for accidental ones. At no time do we assume that some sort of non-control alternative is possible. That is, we do not seriously consider independent behavior-controlling variables that putatively exist in a domain beyond the natural world. There are no unnatural interventions from things like deities or autonomous selves.

Compared with available alternatives, behaviorologists have a powerful behavior engineering capability that is relatively new. The natural science that underlies it consists of principles that, prior to the past 75 years, were for the most part undescribed and therefore unavailable. Enthusiasm for reform among behaviorologists is not based on a nostalgic hope for a return to better times of yore. On the contrary, behaviorologists would assume with great confidence that such ideality could not have been possible. Neither the necessary accidents, nor the capacity to produce the necessary circumstances by design have previously existed.

The enthusiasm of behaviorologists for reform is instead based on these new found powers of behavior technology by which to accomplish important things never before possible. It is the same excitement that a few centuries ago swept the physical science community as its people began to get an inkling of what control might be attained over the physical world. Behaviorologists, able to do effective things that no predecessors could do, are reinforced by breaking new ground with that new technological capacity.

Professor Cloward simply argues that people will always be disobedient in some unpredictable way as if by nature. But disobedience, like all other patterns of operant behavior, is a conditioned and predictable behavioral product. The kind of conditioning that shapes disobedience is easily documented and easily duplicated. Not only is the general course of events by which some one becomes disobedient not a mystery, neither is the process of how to make a person's disobedient behavior elicit a virtuous feeling. It is just as easy to produce the opposite outcome, that is, to make disobedience decrease in frequency and to make being disobedient feel aversive to a person. Either way, it involves elementary behavior engineering, and ordinary folks like parents, teachers, and other authority figures do it all the time. It's just that if they knew in a precise technical sense what they were doing, they could do it better. Science helps people act more effectively, and in this case the relevant basic behavior science happens to be behaviorology.

One should not mistake the principle-and-relation-based engineering discipline of behaviorology for a discipline consisting of endless metaphorical theories that straddle the physical and metaphysical worlds, common and familiar though those disciplines might be. Just as it is unlikely that Cloward could walk into an introductory physics classroom and demonstrate that a single principle of physics being taught there is invalid, neither could he likely walk into a behaviorology classroom and demonstrate that a single principle of that science is invalid.

The lack of experimental control behind which Cloward seeks refuge for his notions of indeterminacy stand as no more of an obstacle to behavior engineering than to electrical engineering. All engineers face the challenge of complexity, and behavior engineers are no exception. But complexity does not imply indeterminacy (Fraley, 1994). It only complicates the advance of technology. Prevailing complexity has not prevented the dawning of the computer age, and there is no reason why complexity of subject matter should stand as an insurmountable obstacle to equally effective advances in the field of behavior. It is folly to muse over what amounts to as-yet-undescribed behavior-controlling relations and treat the resulting unpredictability as some kind of special virtue worthy of admiration as if it were a noble aspect of the human character. To do so is to raise simple ignorance of the prevailing behavior-controlling functional relations to the status of a definitive and noteworthy human trait.

In neither the observer nor the subject is ignorance a trait; it's an unfortunate state, and it is almost always correctable. My grandfather was a coal miner. He regarded the origin of fossil fern leaf traces in the coal as an unknowable mystery. I do not regard his ignorance of geological history as a manifestation of some admirable human trait. And behavioral events are just as natural and explicable as the presence of fern fossils in coal. Preserving one's ignorance about what is controlling behavior, as if the mysterious were to be revered, merely suggests the prevalence of contingencies that would punish one's knowing better.

What does Professor Cloward believe about the fundamental nature of a human organism? He does not tell us explicitly. If I have a small quibble with his response, it is that he only *implied* his basic assumptions about the nature of man. Only a sentence or two would have been required to state them, so that we would not have to guess.

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If a person's behavioral response is not a natural event (i.e., if it is not functionally controlled by the present circumstances and determined by the natural history that has led up to it), then does Cloward believe, as do many people, that a spiritual entity called a "human self" resides in the body and spontaneously, arbitrarily, and, perhaps, capriciously chooses each response and somehow gives the body parts their marching orders? That is what seems to be implied, and it is pure psychological metaphysics.

Most of us do not suppose that turning the ignition key in our car functions to *persuade* an engine spirit to give an order to set the engine parts in motion. We pretty much agree that ghosts are not required to move metal parts. But most people do presume that a ghost called "the self," which might have troublesome tendencies toward capricious and disobedient acts, inhabits the body and is necessary for behavior to occur.

According to that belief, the body putatively does whatever the self-spirit decides. One would have to conclude that, while pieces of metal (car parts) can be moved in natural ways, some sort of ethereal spirit *is* necessary to move pieces of meat (body parts). How do social scientists, whose scientific behavior-related foundations for the most part reside in traditional metaphysical psychology, expect such ideas to be taken seriously (if that, indeed, is what is implicit in Cloward's remarks)?

It is evident to me from Professor Cloward's response that I could profit from a course in sociological history. It is equally evident that Professor Cloward could profit from a natural science course in behavior.

Reactions to Rakos' Review

Rakos has somewhat misconstrued the discipline of behaviorology when he suggests that I view behaviorology "as an epistemological advance over radical behaviorism." First, behaviorology is a comprehensive discipline that features (a) a philosophy of science that happens to be radical behaviorism, (b) an extensive verbal repertoire of scientific principles and relations (to which we refer as the science of behaviorology), and (c) a flexible set of technological intervention practices informed by that science. The function of the set of fundamental assumptions to which we refer as the philosophy of radical behaviorism is to quality-control the science. A common related phrase, "behavior analysis" describes, generally, aspects of science more or less shared among a broad coalition of behavior scientists that represents differing philosophies of science, including radical behaviorism among others. Only a subset of those who call themselves behavior analysts also describe their basic philosophical assumptions as radical behavioristic, as a survey of members of the Association for Behavior Analysis would reveal.

There is also another important distinction pertinent to disciplinary identity. Behaviorology is organized apart from psychology and stands as an independent natural science discipline. Furthermore, to the limited extent that behaviorology can be construed as an organized disciplinary movement, it does not include in its political agenda a quest to change the discipline of psychology.

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Rakos has taken issue with the tone of my work, which he argues is not conducive to the persuasion of persons who entertain fundamentally different views of the human species and human behavior. In a sense Rakos is correct. This work was not written to serve as yet another effort in that long train of literature aimed at persuading persons with non-natural philosophies of these matters to alter their basic ways of thinking. If that had been the objective, the work would have been laced with the euphemisms and indirect phrasings that are meant to obscure the basis of what is said in hopes that the consumer will come to like the taste of it before inquiring about the recipe. My objective was different—namely, to relate the suggested technological solutions and interventions to the underlying basic philosophy and scientific principles as tightly and as explicitly as possible. Such a de-euphemized presentation prevents valid concepts from being rendered in insecure language that leaves them vulnerable to drift.

Also, the soft-sell approach is fundamentally dishonest. It must hide certain important aspects while saliently presenting others. And perhaps even worse, its imprecise language, while intended to produce certain desired effects in the listeners, will, unfortunately, have an eventual adverse affect on the speakers as well. Couched in that insecure language, concepts can easily drift away from their own validity, while the familiar and comfortable but deceptive language of the persuasive soft-sell promotes their wide and uncritical acceptance. These seductive effects occur in both speakers and listeners. People also become responsdently conditioned to feel good about those smoothly palatable though mistaken ideas, especially when they are presented in that comfortable, if nonsensical, language. When the affectations of that language are stripped away and the underlying concepts are described in more stark and precise terms, mistaken concepts might not sound as valid, and they certainly do not feel as good.

As people go through their lives interacting with others on a day- to-day or minute-by-minute basis, they evaluate the worth of others in terms of their own behavior with respect to others. That is, they express the worth of others through their own actions toward those people. The worth of one person to another person can be measured by the cost that the first person will bear to contact (in some way) the second person. That, in turn, is determined by the strength of the reinforcers contacted by the first person as a result of that interaction. Similar contacts with different people result in different degrees of reinforcement, so a worth differential necessarily exists across the range of different persons whom one might contact in a given way. This is the reality of human social interaction, and these are the scientific principles that describe those phenomena in the abstract.

It is possible to ignore all of this reality, perhaps, by following a rule or instruction requiring that one deliberately not take into account what people do. As part of that exercise, a person can abstract and state the proposition that all persons are equally worthy simply because they are members of the human species. If one who does this is under the general social contingencies to behave in accordance with one's own rhetoric, will that person actually then behave as if all people are equally worthwhile?

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The answer can be seen all around us, because many people engage in exactly that sort of self-deceptive rhetoric, and we have only to observe how they behave toward other people. The usual answer is that the contingency to behave that way is relatively impotent in the face of the vast number of practical, mostly naturally occurring, counter-contingencies that prevail in the real world. If one insists that all people are equally worthy, does one really choose a companion at random? Does one really ignore the behavior of people in a neighborhood when deciding whether to move there? Does one really take no interest in whom one's teenage child is socializing because all people are equally worthwhile? In the real world your equal worthiness plus 50 cents gets you a cup of coffee. And I certainly take issue with Rakos' implication that there is a person-like essence that can retain worthiness apart from the person's behavior. A person is behavior, and that is all there is to a person. There is nothing real apart from behavior to be regarded as worthy except, of course, for the physical body, which always has a salvage value attached to it, although the body is usually of so little value that we simply discard it when it is no longer capable of behaving (i.e., dead).

Perhaps it is true, as Rakos implies, that people are easily exploited and manipulated by shouts of "mind control," even though, in general, they themselves are already intuitively far more skillful at this sort of engineering than the crude practitioners in *A Clockwork Orange*. If so, we need to teach, in the public schools, the science of what people are already doing intuitively under natural contingencies. Only then can they accurately review and rethink the efficacy of their practices in a technical sense and gain the improved personal control that we euphemistically describe as the proper and enlightened exercise of their personal responsibilities toward others. Unfortunately, the behavior science niches in the public school curricula are currently filled with traditional psychology, and this paragraph deals in part with the ill-prepared condition in which that leaves people.

Rakos also raises the issue of the prevailing capitalist/socialist dichotomy. It is an incorrect inferential leap to assume that a capitalist system implies judging a person solely in terms of wealth, although that is a common corruption of the ideal. I was careful to insist that a person be judged on the merits of that person's behavior, and wealth does not imply quality behavior, although, if properly expended, it can enable quality behavior. Behavior is an engineerable product in spite of the large amounts of it that occur as unplanned accidents. From good behavioral engineering (i.e., good parenting, good teaching, good leading, etc.) comes good behavior. And wealth, regardless of the system through which it is generated, is a resource that can pay for the engineering of behavioral outcomes. The products of any kind of engineering are never free. Some wealthy families, successful in such endeavors, turn out successive generations of high quality human beings that are widely admired. Or, to take another example, the best sounding school band in the holiday parade usually comes from the school serving the wealthiest section of town. The larger quantities of effective musical behavior exhibited by its members represent extensive family-subsidized musical training. The behavior engineering to put those extraordinary musical capacities in place is simply purchased in markets where others cannot afford to shop.

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The concept of intrinsic worth is a myth that has been useful for propaganda and manipulative purposes, but it is little if at all respected by anyone at a practical level. As soon as anything of the slightest importance is at stake involving the selection of persons, the rhetoric about the equal intrinsic worth of people subsides and is replaced by a strict evaluation of the behavior of the persons in question. Let's take Rakos' ball player example, but remove the ball players from the overcrowded lifeboat and bring them closer to home—say, applicants to a graduate program that has only one open slot. Only one will be saved while the remainder are cast adrift. Rakos himself might be asked to choose. For what will rhetoric about equal intrinsic worth count? Test scores will be examined, references checked, and interviews conducted, and the choice will be made on the basis of comparative behavioral criteria. That the applicants might be closely ranked adds to the difficulty of the procedure but does not change the nature of the criteria. It is all comparative behavior and only behavior. That's all it ever really is.

A terrible circumstance has been perpetrated on the general public. With respect to behavioral phenomena, its members have been robbed of much of the helping capacity of their own verbal repertoires. The verbal capacity is what distinguishes the human organism, and its function is to supplement the antecedent controls on other behaviors in such a way that those behaviors occur under that combined control with improved effectiveness. The admirable quality of being human lies in effective verbal repertoires that can share in the control of other behavior in optimally effective ways. That is the fundamental general function of verbal behavior. Therefore, the essence of humanness cannot lie in imprecise and invalid babble about anything, especially about behavioral events.

Up to a point we tend to do most things better when we concentrate on them or think accurately about them as we do them. But when people are taught illogical and nonsensical ways of describing what is happening behaviorally, the resulting verbal behavior about their other behaviors detracts rather than adds to the quality of the controls on those other behaviors. In simple terms, they behave better intuitively than deliberately, because their ideas about what is occurring amount to a bunch of nonsense that just gets in the way. They have been deprived of the very thing that makes them most human—an effective verbal repertoire. And that is precisely the kind of advantage that the natural science of behaviorology provides to a person. As is true of any natural science—physics, chemistry, biology, geology, or behaviorology—when people think and speak in accordance with natural science principles, they are describing the phenomena of concern with the greatest possible accuracy, and that proves helpful. Accurate descriptions, especially of the prevailing functional controls, are required for effective behavior management, including, but not limited to, the kind that we call self-management.

The allure of deliberately misleading language about behavior, innocuous and laced with piety, is a conditioned result of efforts to convince superstitious people that their indulgence with religious and secular metaphysics is inappropriate, or at least less effective than if a repertoire of natural behavior science were adopted. I think that imprecise and euphemistic language damages its users as much or more

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than it pacifies and cajoles the listeners. And I also think that the members of the community to which those appeals are directed cannot begin to afford the implications of the message. Beyond certain points in their lives there are things, however true, that people can no longer afford to know. Before we can teach behaviorology, or even the various repertoires that cluster under the label of behavior analysis, we first have to shape the kinds of persons who can afford the implications of the lessons.

REFERENCE

- Fraley, L. E. (1994). Uncertainty about determinism: A critical review of challenges to the determinism of modern science. *Behavior and Philosophy*, 22(2), 71-83.