

TOWARD A SOLUTION: A REJOINDER

JAMES G. HOLLAND

I may quibble, Jay, as to whom among us is the more optimistic. I wrote this paper and addressed it to my fellow behaviorists precisely because of my high expectations for the role of behaviorism in the coming evolution of social practices and institutional reforms. Our science of behaviorism can enable the analysis of the contingency management systems that constitute society's institutions. I have suggested that this analysis will show the widespread malaise in society—the alienation, depression, crime, alcoholism, drug addiction, and violence—to be the natural outcome of these prevailing systems of reinforcement contingencies. And in these control systems, the stratification and the reinforcement of competition are most commonly at the base of the problem. Such an analysis is more, Nate, than a “reminder of inequities”. The analysis of root causes is the first step toward changing the systems of control. Many of the various advocacy groups and social reformers recognize, with us, that the causes of the social problems that concern them are in the specific nature of the institutions in question. We are, then, the natural allies of the very advocacy groups who have so persistently attacked us as the ultimate characterization of the oppressor; we, in turn, seem locked in a defensive stance that only confirms, for them, their incorrect beliefs.

After showing the basis of problems in society's social control systems, and helping to equip the reformer for struggle to modify the system, finally we can play an important role in the analysis of alternative, nonoppressive, egalitarian social forms. These three steps I expect to see unfold as a natural process, interpretable behav-

iorally, whether or not trained behaviorists are involved. But things should develop so much better if our science is a part of it. Such respect for our science and such optimism is the reason I wrote the paper; and the behavior analyst's greater sensitivity to “regnant societal variables” and less “readiness to appeal to inner causes” gives reason to trust that behaviorism will be part of the solution.

You have suggested, Iz, that radical behaviorism did not develop in response to the requirements of our social system. To this I thoroughly agree. While the applications have often been in the service of power, the science, radical behaviorism, developed as an objective, descriptive science. This may have been the result of benign neglect. Much of Skinner's research was unfunded and many years regularly elapsed between his most important works and any response to them at all. It is possible, however, that the overwhelming misunderstanding and misrepresentation of radical behaviorism *is* the result of the needs of the social system. Behaviorism is dangerous to the capitalist system because it denies the inner causes used to justify stratification, and reveals the basis of human troubles in controlling variables in society's system of management. Thus, popular misunderstanding and rejection of behaviorism does serve a need of the social system.

The massive misunderstanding of behaviorism has been accompanied by widespread encouragement and popularization of the view that aggression, competition, hierarchy, and male dominance are simply the natural order of things, and determined throughout the animal kingdom and

in all human societies as a biological necessity. I hope, Iz, that this is not what you were endorsing with your Martian and mushrooms story. It is unlikely that you do, since so much of the rest of your remarks, if stripped of the accusing tone, seems in agreement with my thesis that troublesome behaviors result from troublesome social contingencies. At any rate, it is untrue that "in every social system there are those who wield disproportionate control . . .". For example, hunting societies such as Congo Pygmies, Kalahari Bushmen, and the Australian Aborigines typically are based on cooperation and sharing without hierarchy and are completely nonviolent (Pilbeam, 1975). One may dismiss these as "primitive", and in so doing illustrate the societal influence on shaping ideology here discussed.

Then, too, Cuba and China are modern sophisticated societies and both have moved well toward becoming collective, egalitarian, and classless, although the avalanche of misinformation will prevent most readers from entertaining this view. Nevertheless, China and Cuba merit a careful look by behaviorists. You may be right, Iz, that Russia has a drinking problem, but it has been argued (Chavance, 1977) that their real problem is that they failed to form a socialist system. China and Cuba, on the other hand, have managed feats that elude us. They have practically eliminated drug abuse, alcoholism, prostitution, and illiteracy; and they have greatly reduced crime and mental illness (Horn, 1969; Russell, 1972). Cuba, for example, in a single year—1961—reduced the rate of illiteracy from close to 25% to near zero. Iz, even solving the reading problem depends on the social order as much as good teaching materials of which we now have more than enough (Smith, 1977), along with our growing number of poor readers.

A lot is possible when contingencies support cooperation rather than competition in egalitarian rather than hierarchical management forms. Nate, that the quick fix in special settings will not do much if the original prevailing environment persists is acknowledged in the efforts made by the best therapists to arrange contingencies

for carryover outside the clinic. The reversal designs so favored in JABA likewise attest to the dependence of behavior on prevailing contingencies.

In your suggestion, Iz, that professionals can be characterized as acting as double agents, you are in accord with Jay and me in recognizing the frequent alignment with power by practising behaviorists (and most other "helping" professions). It is a shock for those who see this society's power structures as the source of people's problems when they discover that the behavior analyst is in league with the very forces against which they struggle. The situation is worsened when these double agents act as the system's punishers. Nate, it is true that aversive techniques are used predominantly for "repugnant" acts. Stephanie Stolz, after searching the literature on the question of when aversive consequences are used in therapy, concludes: "Note, however, when these strong aversive techniques are used: for alcoholism, sexual deviance, substance abuse—in short, for behavior that society considers repugnant" (Stolz, *in press*).

The misunderstanding of the nature and potential of behaviorism caused by our role as double agents is illustrated in a statement from a publication of the Radical Therapist collection (Ratner, 1977): "behaviorism necessarily supports and perpetuates the status quo while radical psychology seeks to alter it fundamentally. For behaviorism the present norm is what should be." As to being part of the solution, the statement continues, "behaviorism reflects the values of the capitalist society . . . Behaviorism does not allow one to understand this society, much less question it, devise an alternative and work to implement it."

Thus, the people who struggle for change do not benefit from the science that offers the means for change because the practitioners are busily being double agents, earning, thereby, the level of trust and respect of their cloak-and-dagger counterparts. Yet, Nate, I agree that it is time that we, too, get on with solutions. This means, of course, Iz, making the "fine-grained analysis"

not only for the present social order but also in exploring alternatives. Some analysis of alternatives must await the space of another paper on both the alternatives shown by successful socialist systems like China and Cuba, as well as the alternatives here in the form of the increasing experimentation in local cooperatives or collective neighborhood groups (Oliver, 1976). These groups strive, simultaneously, to escape the effects of corporate exploitation and to stop degradation of the environment through developing and using soft technologies. To be a part of the solution, the behaviorist should be part of these experiments.

The idea is not new. Frazier in Skinner's *Walden Two* states the source of modern society's problems as "Each of us is engaged in a pitched battle with the rest of mankind." Frazier also, characteristically, suggests the method of reaching a solution. "But why not experiment? The questions are simple enough. What's the best behavior for the individual so far as the group is concerned? And how can the individual be induced to behave in that way? Why not explore these questions in a scientific spirit?" (Skinner, 1948, p. 95).

Why not, indeed? The experiments have begun. The experimenters are principally untrained and unaware "behaviorists", confused by our double-agentry. With so much to offer I hope we trained and aware behaviorists will become totally committed to the people and totally committed to being part of the solution.

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