SOCIAL HISTORY AND THE BEHAVIORAL REPERTOIRE

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Over the many years I have functioned as a social psychologist, behavior analysis has represented to me a kind of conceptual border, a position taken on the nature of human existence that it was absolutely necessary to explore. That is, there is a sense in which the proposition that behavior occurs as a result of its past consequences is unassailable. Indeed, even the idea of intention requires a concern with consequences. Be that as it may, behavior analysis has not been considered to be relevant to most of the problems of social psychology by most social theorists. I would like to consider some new conceptual developments in social psychology along with what I perceive to be an enhanced sensibility within behavior analysis towards the behavioral repertoire, and to suggest a way of proceeding that may bring the two together.

My recent book, *Assumptions of Social Psychology: A Reexamination* (1991), was, in part, an attempt to deal seriously with behavior analysis within the context of modern social psychology. That book, Bernard Guerin's (1992a) thoughtful review of it in *JEAB*, and several behavior analysts' continuing efforts to clarify the epistemological quality of behavioral analysis may all have commonalities that are not immediately apparent.

In order to make further progress in achieving mutual understanding, it is first necessary to clarify what I consider to be a common misunderstanding among many psychologists regarding the concepts of cause and intention. The first section of the present paper addresses this issue. In the second section, the ideas of the behavioral repertoire and that of an active social history are examined. An example of a specific social activity for possible behavioral-historical analysis is discussed in the third section, and the paper ends with an epilogue.

Intention

Presumably in agreement with other behavior analysts, Guerin (1992a) and Himeline

(1983, 1992) make the distinction between "knowing how" and "knowing that" within the context of the general problem of causality. "Knowing that" includes statements of causality and is entirely verbal, whereas "knowing how" is a capacity found in cats, dogs, and other creatures as well as human beings, as they act with respect to relations that humans would describe as causal. This is a position with which I have no quarrel, nor did Hume or Kant. That is, the idea of cause is a secondary response to a set of perceived conditions in the world around one. Only human beings (presumably) are capable of thinking about causes. In contrast, nonhuman animals can respond appropriately to the world in that a particular act of theirs may be reinforced and then they are said to "know how," but only humans can refer to this behavior as caused. This is similar to the point made by Zettle and Hayes (1982) that rule-governed behavior involves both contingencies that include verbal behavior and those that do not, but are contingency shaped.

What is at issue when a human being invokes a verbal analysis that includes the term "cause"? Because Chapter 3 of my book is a historical and conceptual analysis of that topic, I will address myself here only to the status of concepts of causality that are relevant to behavior analysis. It is my contention, although disputed by Guerin, that the ontological correspondence idea of causality attributed to behavioral commonalities strengthens the behavior-analytic approach rather than distorting or weakening it.

Guerin's (1992a) analysis of the correspondence theory of causality extends well beyond the context of my remarks on how the ontological aspect of causation works within behavioral analysis. Let me try to be more clear. My discussion takes the form of describing how a behavior analyst, or indeed anyone, behaves and what is at issue when they make a causal inference. In short, they assume that an animal's behavior in experiments is representative of what it does in the natural world as well, if the patterns observed fulfill two cri-

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teria: (a) The behavior is seen to occur repeatedly under similar circumstances with no contrary instances, and (b) the statement about such behavior is logically and empirically consistent with a series of similar statements about similar behavior (i.e., the particular behavior is identified as an instance of a generic orderly relation). This does not imply that a pragmatic interpretation of cause is contradictory to an ontological interpretation. The ontological position has to do with the structured communicable beliefs of scientists. Scientists and people in general believe that the world operates the way their theories say it does. Without this correspondence between assumption and world, there is no explanation of any kind. Skinner (1945) made the point that the behavioral hypothesis that what one observes and talks about is always the "real" or "physical" world. This suggests, to me, that a successful causative, behavioral statement also implies a correspondence of the statement with the actual world.

When various schedules of reinforcement were discovered (e.g., Ferster & Skinner, 1957) they were presented as functional relationships existing among the variables examined. The implicit form of these schedules of reinforcement is predictive (i.e., if one reinforces an animal's responding at a certain rate, one will then observe, *ceteris paribus*, a certain response frequency). If the prediction holds over time and circumstance, then it can be said to be a causative law of behavioral response. It is a law because it fits the two criteria, listed above, for establishing the presence of a cause. That is, it is consistent over time with no contrary instances, and it is logically and inductively related to other similar functional relationships observed within the same context. The arguments leading to the establishment of these two criteria are discussed in Chapters 3 and 5 of *Assumptions*, and the reader is referred to them for elaboration.

Behavior analysts, I feel reasonably confident, are attempting to discover various behavior-consequence functional relationships that are generic to the circumstances of their occurrence. That is, they hope that these relationships are indeed reflective of the world around them. Therefore, a correspondence or ontological view of causation is not only a necessity, but also indicates a certain degree to which behavior analysis has, to use its own terms, displayed accurate tacting of an orderly empirical relation.

The term *intention* must mean something different from causation or we would not use or need both terms. We speak of causation when we can predict. Making the predictive statement, "I am going to become very tense this afternoon" suggests a different process from that involved in the intentional statement, "I am going to go for a walk." In the first example I am stating that, given what I know about my behavior in similar important situations, when I approach my job interview I will begin to perspire, my heart rate will increase, and my mouth will become dry. Knowing something about operant and reactive conditioning, I can easily place such a causative statement within a group of similar statements to which it is related by referring to the general principles of reactive and operant conditioning. I can also give examples of similar circumstances that produce other behavior that is inductively related to my job-interview behavior. This, having been done, fulfills the condition stated in (b) above. If I am generally successful in these kinds of predictions, I have fulfilled (a) as well.

My intentional statement indicates a commitment of what I will do in the future. I can change my intention at any time. I cannot legitimately change my prediction of a cause preceding an effect unless I obtain new information or discover a mistake. From these concepts of cause and intention, one cannot say that an intention causes an event to take place. They are simply not the same processes, although cause and intention may be used in the same way in ordinary language. If one insists on using the two terms as virtually synonymous, one loses the ability to distinguish between that process of behavior and consequence we refer to when we use the term *cause* and the process of behavior and consequence we refer to when we use the word *intention*.

This is not to say that there are not causal elements involved in the intentional process, however (see pp. 68 and 69 in Lana, 1991, for a more detailed discussion of this point), I may believe that I go to the corner store every day because I intend to buy a newspaper, when an observer might notice that I am actually rewarded by the smile from the attractive sales clerk (i.e., my intention is truly felt by me, but another, causal explanation more accurately predicts my behavior). Intention implies awareness with respect to one's future behavior. One may or may not know the causes of

one's behavior, but one always knows the behavioral implications of one's intentions. Also, knowing the cause of one's behavior means that it is possible to intentionally rearrange environmental contingencies to change that behavior.

Saying that intentions are not causes is not saying that intentions are not behavior; however, Guerin and I may part company here. In my view, the locus of control of an intention is different from that of caused behavior. If an individual is a heavy smoker and is worried about the consequences of this behavior, there are several ways he or she can proceed. The smoker can conclude that he or she is caused to smoke heavily because of addiction; that is, he or she believes that a chemical condition in the blood produces behavior that can be described as a craving for tobacco. Therefore, the smoker is powerless to change the behavior. Then again, the smoker can conclude that, in any case, stopping smoking is a matter of intention, similar to choosing what to have for lunch (a decision easily made).

Intentions are not causes, because they do not adhere to the two principles of causation. Intentions can often be easily changed, whereas causes cannot. Intentions, therefore, do not have the consistency of causes (Criterion 1), and intentions do not necessarily fit into an empirically related set of similar intentions (Criterion 2).

How then do intentions come about? They certainly involve contingencies, probably in the extended past of the individual, but they also involve an aspect of the human behavioral repertoire that yields different behavior from that of invoking causes. We can at least hold open the possibility that making intentions is part of the brain-behavior mechanism, although I know that this conclusion is one avoided by most behavior analysts. Behavior analysts do speak of "commitments" and of "self-control," however (e.g., Rachlin & Green, 1972), so we seem to acknowledge similar if not identically categorized phenomena.

If these distinctions between cause and intention are accepted, it allows the behavior analyst to indicate more carefully the specific behavior that is of interest from a variety of perspectives than would fusing intention and cause as if they were interchangeable. In short, intention indicates a kind of behavior and consequence that causation does not and vice versa. I believe the distinction I have made between

intention and cause serves behavior analysis as well as it does other theoretical positions.

The Verbal Community, Social History, and the Behavioral Repertoire

In *Verbal Behavior*, Skinner says, "All behavior, verbal or otherwise, is subject to Kantian a priori's in the sense that man as a behaving system has inescapable characteristics and limitations" (Skinner, 1957, p. 451). That which is a priori can, by definition, only be described. It cannot be constructed as can a predictable response by the process of linking it with a consequence. On this basis, I suggest that behavior analysis needs to direct its attention to detailed characteristics of the verbal community and examine both its verbal patterns and the social practices that are maintained in coordination with those verbal patterns.

Even though these patterns may be maintained by nonspecific community reinforcers, as Guerin suggests, one still needs to describe the behavior of concern in generic terms. This in itself is a major task, as I will illustrate in the third section of the paper. The description of this behavior quite often needs to be historical and, therefore, interpretive, because the behavioral determiners may no longer be available for examination. I happen to think that historical analysis is a nonreducible method. Schnaitter's (1976) paper on private events indicates that history-based interpretation is necessary in nonexperimental behavioral communication for reasons similar to the ones given here. I believe that most behavior analysts would agree with me that the contingencies extant in a verbal community with regard to the way it organizes itself are likely to be the result of a relatively long line of behavior and consequence.

Glenn (1988) has made the similar point that although cultural practices may be "reduced to" contingencies of reinforcement operating on each individual taking part in the practice, such reduction cannot fully explain its development and continuance. Both the current environment and the history of the relevant environment regarding an individual's activities must be considered. In behavior analysis much emphasis has been placed upon environmental contingencies, perhaps to the neglect of interactions among the individual's activities that may include behavioral repertoires more extensive than are usually invoked by the

behavior analyst. For example, suppose a person who is intending is displaying a human characteristic, which has been described above, not found in other animals. Let's say this intending, which is not itself a cause, is part of the human behavioral repertoire. Does this assumption disturb the general behavior-analytic position? I don't think so, no more than would the observation that a human being cannot fly, no matter what the environmental contingencies, because of the way he or she is built. In addition, I take Glenn's position to be consistent with the idea that an analysis of a culture cannot be reduced to the behavior of individuals because cultural practices, even though comprised of the behavior of individuals, have outcomes of their own, outcomes that affect whether or not the culture survives and changes. This implies that people's incorrect perceptions are as crucial to the nature and workings of society as are their correct perceptions about that society. Harris (1977), in a similar vein, distinguishes between rules that can be empirically tested independent of the verbal community in which they emerge and rules developed within the verbal community that may or may not be tested or testable.

Of Skinner's (1986) three kinds of selection—biological evolution, behavioral evolution, and cultural evolution—the last form has only recently been of evident interest to behavior analysts. This is one reason why social psychologists have not made much of behavior analysis to date. The contemporary salience of behavior analysts' interest in cultural evolution invites greater communication across that traditional boundary.

Complementary developments have occurred in social psychology, although to be sure, there is a contrary tradition. Illustrating the latter, Markus and Zajonc's (1985) review of the cognitive perspective in the *Handbook of Social Psychology* describes theories of various forms of social cognition, categorized along dimensions that either emphasize stimulus control over verbal behavior or emphasize non-reducible states of the organism that function independently of specific externally observable factors. The explanatory emphasis on cognitive structures takes the form of introducing an organizing principle such as an inferential set (Jones & Thibault, 1958) schemas (Neisser, 1976; Stotland & Cannon, 1972), attitudes

(Tesser & Cowan, 1975, 1977), and many others as well. These social psychologists are mute on the distinction between cause and intention, although there has been some concern with a cause-reason distinction (Buss, 1978) within the attribution-of-causality literature. In the past 20 years, with the work of Gergen (1974), Lana (1969, 1976, 1991) and others, there has been some increased sensitivity on the part of social psychologists to interpretive and historical analysis of social information. The position taken in the current paper on the difference between cause and intention is, then, neither a minority nor a majority view in current social psychology.

Contrary to behavior-analytic emphasis, even the social theorists who embrace a historical perspective accept the belief in the self as agent, to which most people ascribe, as a fact to be dealt with in itself, even though behavior may be better explained by its connection to environmental contingencies. Suppose behavior analysis can never convince people that they are not totally the source of their own behavior. We must still deal with what is at issue when one speaks of people's beliefs if we are to make sense of the verbal community.

Illustrating this, the myths of a society are verbal prescriptions for behavior that have taken a narrative or fictional form and that have developed over long historical periods. Quite often myths suggest an immutable nature of human beings and the behavior that is bound to follow from these characteristics. At other times myths suggest desirable behavior that is presumed to be under the agency of the individual. The Greek belief in fate illustrates the expectation of inevitable behavior given that one is human. The western frontier myth of American culture suggests the ultimate agency of the stalwart individual in the face of apparently insurmountable problems. Freud and Jung believed Greek mythology reflected a dim awareness by the Greeks of the universal conditions of their own nature. The myth of Oedipus Rex is understood by Freud to reflect the Greek awareness, however vague it might have been, of the universal relation existing between mother and son.

By most any viewpoint, myths are historical accounts of both the previous behavior of a community and of desirable and undesirable behavior that provide a prescription for the

present generation. If these myths are universal and long lasting, then they must, at some level, be taken as part of the social behavioral repertoire and must be studied as such just as Freud used myths to infer what the ancient Greeks universally understood, if only dimly, about their lives. I believe Guerin and I are in agreement on this point. Guerin (1992a, 1992b) and Himeline (1992) are correct in agreeing with Geertz (1975) that the usual conception of a human as a unique bounded universe set against a social and natural background is wrong. As Guerin points out, one of the principal arguments of my book is that there is an immediate and complete fusion of the individual's existence with that of the group. Vico (1961) understood this, as did Freud. Social psychologists are more and more coming to understand this as well.

In his review of my book Guerin says, "Behavior analysts do need to pay more attention to the structure of behavioral repertoires, but it is the locus of the structure that is really in question here, not whether there are patterns in behavior or not" (p. 596). I think I agree, although it seems to me that locus and patterns of behavior need to be handled within the same terms of reference. Perhaps an example of what I mean by a historical analysis of part of the human behavioral repertoire may be useful at this point. In any case, it might suggest further avenues for the interaction of social psychology with behavior analysis.

Marriage

If human social responses varied infinitely and unsystematically, then, obviously, there could be no universal social arrangement. In order for a social arrangement to be universal across all cultures, it is necessary to assume that human beings are limited in the ways they are able to react to others. That is, possible responses of one person to another concerning a certain social arrangement or goal come from a finite pool. It is also possible for a social arrangement to be fixed through constancies of the physical environment, but this is unlikely to apply to the peculiarities of group living arrangements.

At one level it seems obvious that there are a number of social universals such as marriage, customs for burying the dead, and arrangements for educating the young. The universality of these kinds of social behavior resides

in the observation that there is no known society, either currently or historically, that does not include specific behavioral prescriptions regarding these activities. Granting that during the Stone Age, or before some specified point in human history, these social arrangements might not yet have developed, they are certainly present after that point in all groups. I suggest that the ways that people behave in all cultures regarding these social arrangements are similar and are, in a certain sense, measurable. Modern sociologists and anthropologists (e.g., Suggs & Miracle, 1993) have emphasized that the collectivity determines access to the mating system of males and females and that factors such as ecology, economics, politics, class, power, ideology, and technology determine the specific attributes of the institution. All of these factors influence the verbal behavior of participants when they speak of marriage, even though some individuals may not speak of marriage at all.

This universal social behavior becomes apparent when we list the choices that define the attributes of the arrangement. For example, one can either choose to become married or not. This choice can be considered at various times throughout a person's life, but the results of the choice are the same. That is, if a person chooses to become married, he or she needs to answer the following questions: Whom shall I marry? By what ritual shall I be married? How shall I respond to my partner after I am married? One can put these questions in a number of other ways, but these will suffice for the moment.

If we examine these questions from a behavior-analytic perspective, we can rephrase them so that they become: What characteristics of partner and environmental circumstances would reinforce my response of asking a person to marry me? What marriage ritual will enhance mutually reinforcing interactions between us and minimize aversive ones? (This question, of course, may not be appropriate in a monolithic culture where there is but one ritual; however, the behavioral implications are the same as they are in a more complex society.) What reinforcements do I expect from my partner for what behavior on my part and vice versa?

The defining characteristics of marriage need to be enumerated. Marriage always consists of the performance of a ritual, after which the

two people are said to be married as accepted by both of them and by the community in which they live or with which they identify. Marriage may consist of cohabiting, copulating, bearing children, having responsibilities for one another, and having a unique affection for one another. Obviously these last five characteristics are not always present in a marriage. It is, however, always true that married people have agreed to, and have experienced, a ritual that has communally and personally produced the married state. The only possible exception is that arrangement of living together which is called common-law marriage, for which, by definition, no ritual has been performed. However, the very definition of common-law marriage depends totally on the six elements of marriage listed above. That is, when a marriage ritual is absent, a common-law marriage is said to exist when some of the other five characteristics have been present for a specified amount of time. In short, the law indicates that if you have not been officially married, but behave as if you have for a number of years, then you are married.

The limits of behavior that both define marriage and illustrate its universality can be clarified by analyzing the behavioral choices that are possible in a given community. In those cultures in which the choice of entering marriage is ultimately left to the potential participants (which is the case in most modern, certainly western, cultures), choosing not to be married sets one into an antithetical relation to the married people with whom one has contact. People respond differently, along certain dimensions, to people who are married than to those who are not.

At this point we can tentatively conclude that the only universally accepted aspect of the state of marriage is that there is always a ritual associated with passing from an unmarried state to a married state. It is clear, even from causal observation, that the nature of that ritual will vary widely from community to community. The marriage ritual of Roman Catholics is not the same as that of Muslims, although elements of the ceremonies may be similar. Therefore, it is not in the specific behavior of the rituals that we find those types of behavior that are present in all societies, but rather in the fact that a ritual is performed at all. A ritual always stands in systematic relation to other objects and behavior and, in

part, defines the community in which it takes place. If the marriage ritual is performed by a church official, symbols and behavior representing God are always present and everyday nonsymbolic behavior (such as eating) takes on a symbolic meaning by juxtaposing it with the marriage ritual (as when one participates in the wedding feast). The repetition of the same or similar ceremonies among the marrying members of the community both defines the group and maintains the ritual. For many, not participating in the ritual of marriage prescribed by their community can mean losing membership in it. Even those individuals who reject the usual religio-cultural forms of marriage ritual are required by law to participate in a civil ritual.

If, on the arguments given above, we assume that marriage is a stable, universal, social behavioral arrangement, then a behavior analysis of it requires that we (a) describe the universal quality of marriage-related behavior and (b) record and trace people's verbal behavior concerning marriage and their actual marriage-related behavior. The universal characteristics involved in this social arrangement can be considered to be part of the behavioral repertoire of human beings that happens to involve the community (i.e., they are social).

Because the social behavioral repertoire itself has been built over historic time, as is obvious in the case of marriage, an understanding of this arrangement needs to be made at three levels. The first is the descriptive level (i.e., the fact that all communities require some ritual to be completed in order to consider that two people are treated as married). The second level requires that we describe, as best we can, the changing individual behavior patterns over time regarding the various elements of marriage (i.e., the six characteristics listed above). The third level is the assessment of the behavior pattern of a single individual at any particular time regarding the same behavior.

The first level has already been discussed. The second, or behavioral-historical level, can be assessed by comparing survey data gathered at various time periods. Unfortunately, reasonably accurate surveys of this sort have been taken only during the last 20 years or so, and the result is that lengthy historical analyses may not be possible. The third level requires that we observe people and question them about these issues at a given time.

Another distinction needs to be made regarding the nature of the data gathered. One set of data refers to people's perception and choice regarding elements of marriage, and another set refers to the actual consequences of marriage-related behavior and its reinforcing properties. For example, we may notice that the percentage of divorces among childless couples is much greater than that for couples with children when we control for other relevant factors. We can then conclude that children have something to do with reinforcing that behavior we call remaining married. On the other hand, we might find that most people, at a particular time, state that having children or not is irrelevant to their staying married. Somehow we must account for both sets of data, because they are telling us something important about a crucial aspect of social existence.

At this point, I don't know how to gather data efficiently about either of these problems, but I believe that it is important to do so. Surveys give us some indication of the ways in which people perceive the society around them with regard to their own participation in it. Nevertheless, people may be ignorant of the actual reinforcements controlling their behavior, as in the example given above regarding children and marriage. Behavior analysts and Marvin Harris (1977) agree on this point.

Epilogue

In Lloyd's and Vargas's 1985 reviews of Harris's (1977) work, they observed that both cultural materialism and current behavior-analytic theory maintain that overt responses to environmental variables are followed by verbal rationalizations or attributions of why the responses occur, whereas mainstream psychology and anthropology hold that thoughts and mental processes precede, or cause, behavior. I am struck with the similarity of that observation to my own regarding the work of Giambattista Vico in the early 18th century.

Vico's fundamental objection to Descartes placing rationality (i.e., mathematico-logical thinking) at the beginning of understanding was based upon his observation that ancient people built their verbal terms of understanding on the experiences they had with the world around them. What they thought they knew best was the activity of their own bodies. Therefore, body metaphors were some of the

earliest terms of explanation. Such phrases as "the head of the stream" or "the foot of the bed" explain, in part, the nature of both stream and bed. Because terms of explanation were based on the early experiences of both a group of people and a single individual growing up within the group, Descartes' rationality had to have been preceded by this form of behavior and consequence in the history of the development of human explanation. Vico's analysis of ancient texts focused on the way language was used to draw conclusions compared with analytical language used in later historical periods. His conclusion, without presenting the details of the argument here, was that the modern (Cartesian) logico-mathematical thinking used in science evolved because of the social contingencies that occurred over the course of the development of a verbal community.

Typically, in an analysis of behavior, behavior is treated as if it were nonhistorical in the sense that knowledge of the past history of the organism, although containing the reinforcement sequences that have produced the individual's current behavior, is not essential for changing behavior. That is, an individual's behavior is always potentially changeable by applying appropriate reinforcement schedules. The truly historical analysis requires that the particular history of an individual or group have a current behavioral component that is integrated by the individual or group so that the past events and their meaning are verbally reviewable. This view, however, requires the caveat that the individual's or group's verbal review may not be the correct interpretation of past events. Nevertheless, these interpretations are important for fully understanding both.

An adequate assessment of past events that influence behavior patterns in the present may not be recoverable, as when someone may not know the historical origins of a particular celebration, not understood why he or she believes the celebration to be important, but "knows" that it is important. Knowledge of an individual's group history may allow an observer to predict and understand, in a historical sense, the person's behavior. For example, although I may be able to predict that an individual will decorate a Christmas tree to celebrate that holiday because I know this person to be an American Christian, the individual may not know the historical reasons why a tree is used in the

celebration and I might. The kinds of decorations used on the tree might be best predicted, however, by an analysis of the relevant individual reinforcement history.

The study of social history can be important, rather than merely interesting, only if its revelation allows us to expect certain behavior of the group and its individuals in the future. The study of history must allow us to predict change under varying conditions in the future. A successful historical prediction, however, is obviously not demonstrable in the same manner as a successful prediction made as the result of formal experimentation. Indeed, predictions from formal experimentation are always preferable to predictions made from other procedures. However, experimentation is sometimes impossible or irrelevant in examining certain social activity (Lana, 1991). Social activity that is universally found among all human beings throughout recorded history is not amenable to experimental examination, but can only be dealt with by historical description and interpretation.

Social beliefs and behavior, we may assume, developed because of behavior-reinforcement sequences. However, for at least some purposes, it is more useful to describe the beliefs and behavior than it is to attempt to recover the behavior-reinforcement sequence. Conversely, a focus on the reinforcing properties of certain behavior sequences now existing regarding the same or similar social activity can be fruitful.

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