In Response

On Mentalistic Terms: Another View

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Morse and Bruns (1983) is the most recent in a line of articles in *The Behavior Analyst* objecting to the growing use of mentalistic terms and explanation in behavior analysis (c.f., Branch & Malagodi, 1980; Knapp, 1982; Michael, 1980). These authors view this trend as being under the control of mentalistic audiences and suggest rigorously behavioristic countercontrolling audiences as the solution.

While it is no doubt sound policy for specifically behavior-analytic journals and organizations to utilize thoroughly behavioral review boards, this suggestion has limitations based on an incomplete analysis of the function of the audience variable. Audience control "always acts in concert with at least one other variable, which more specifically determines the form of the response" (Skinner, 1957, p. 174). In the cases of data reporting and interpretation, the tact and descriptive autoclitics are clearly implicated (Skinner, 1957, pp. 422-428). While the audience variable may determine the strength of several possible available verbal operants ("maze running speed increased" vs "anticipatory goal reactions increased"), Skinner's analysis would suggest that the primary controlling relation is between the object or event observed and the verbal response. I would suggest that in many instances, the faulty relation is the tact and not audience control, as it may well be that some researchers have no other verbal repertoires

available but the mentalistic when they explore areas such as symbolic communication, memory, spacial movement, and attention (e.g., Hulse, Fowler, & Honig, 1978). In these specific research areas, no fine-grained behavioral descriptive systems have been developed which can compete with those developed by cognitive researchers who have been actively collecting and interpreting data for decades. It is unlikely that either stronger indoctrination (Michael, 1980) or maintenance systems (Morse & Bruns, 1983) will do more than suggest that these areas of research are "off limits" because they cannot be discussed adequately with available behavioral language or drive those who pursue such research into submitting their findings to the "mentalists."

Committed behavior analysts have clear incentives for exploring new areas, not only because there are interesting areas which have yet to undergo the objective scrutiny of the discipline, but because the behavior-analytic enterprise is often criticized from outside for failing to tackle the heady problems of language, thought, memory, and individual differences. Indeed, most of these areas have been attended to by the behavioral community primarily through theoretical analyses rather than confronted by data analysis.

While the use of mentalistic terms is objectionable, the case of mentalistic *explanation* is more serious. Here the researcher has not just used an established, if theoretically inappropriate, tact: he or she has stepped out of behavior analysis and behaviorism itself. Simply calling one's approach one of various "behav-

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iorisms" does not make it so. (There are no magical mands in science!)

Perhaps a more cogent solution would be to distinguish between use of terms laden with excess explanatory baggage and genuine mentalistic explanation. This can usually be done by excising offending terms and replacing them with either non-cognitive ones (if available) or neologisms. If such replacement can be made without violence to the basic argument, the problem is only "skin deep," and the use of reviewers who are knowledgeable in the specific areas addressed and who are willing to either develop new terms or live with old ones rigorously defined is the likely remedy. If mentalistic argument still remains, reviewers may have

to take action which is more than cosmetic.

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