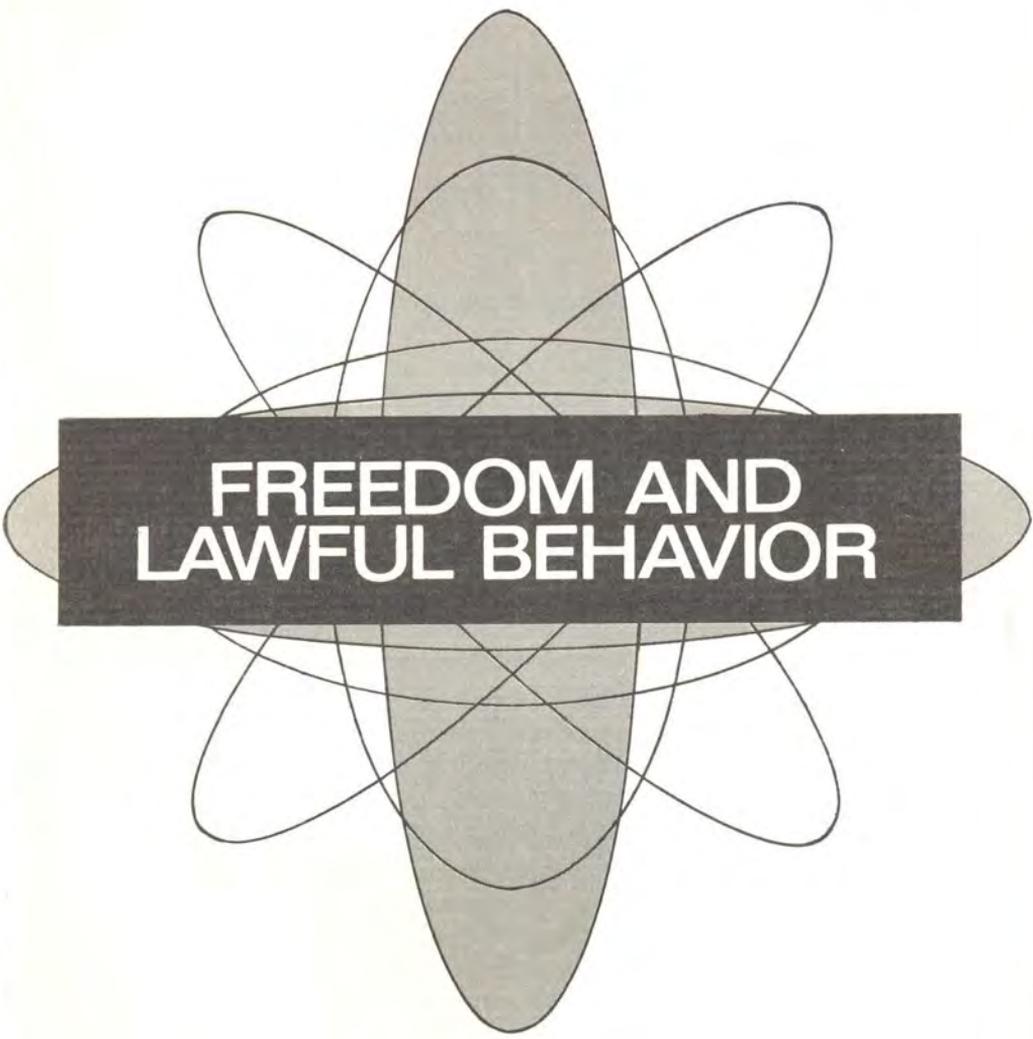


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**FREEDOM AND
LAWFUL BEHAVIOR**

By **RICHARD SCHNEIDER**

TENTH ANNUAL FACULTY LECTURE

Riverside City College 1970

RIVERSIDE CITY COLLEGE
ANNUAL FACULTY LECTURES

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Freedom and Lawful Behavior

by

RICHARD SCHNEIDER

We Americans, since our beginnings, have been subscribing both socially and politically to the notion of behavioral control. In the interdependencies of our social living we feel the necessity to get the other fellow to do what we want. The skeins of legal and social legislation attest to the fervor and seriousness by which we push and pull each other. And in the behavioral sciences the central status of conditioning and learning has for many decades resisted erosion. In the larger society and among behavioral scientists, the possibility of the "abundant life," elusive as it has been, gods and enchants.

But if control seems to promise man his dreams of utopia, it also seems to threaten nightmares in the abyss. Paralleling the development of effective techniques in conditioning and learning by society's directors, there appeared such analytic and prophetic works as *Hidden Persuaders*, *Brave New World*, and *1984*, depicting the abjectness of automated people. In the minds of some, intensive study of the lawfulness of behavior is a menace to the individual's sacred integrity. But despite the polemics, behavioral manipulation, control, and maneuvering — ranging from the subtle to the blantant — are tools of our ongoing social strategy. The applications range widely from brain washing to teaching machines, from altruism to treachery, from love to war, from crime to diplomacy. Sometimes these are successful; sometimes not, but they are justified, defended, and even extolled.

are, of course, similarities in both, but simultaneously some significant differences.

A familiar precept is that of respondent learning or classical conditioning, perhaps best known through the Pavlov-dog-salivation-bell experiment. The sequence, you recall, is this:

1. The normal resting dog salivates.
2. Ringing a bell has a *neutral* effect upon salivation.
3. Meat powder in the dog's mouth causes excessive salivation.
4. Connecting the two stimuli so that the bell precedes the meat powder by about a second, and repeating this sequence the required number of times, the bell and meat powder produce salivation. Of course, it must, for meat powder by itself causes salivation.
5. Finally, the bell alone, not followed by meat powder, produces salivation. The dog is now repeating the old response, but is responding to a new stimulus.

We may analyze the irresistible control over the dog. Most importantly, and most ominously, the whole operation was *done upon the dog*. The dog could not initiate, or arrange, or resist. He was being environmentally manipulated to respond to a stimulus over which he had no choice. In fact, salivating to the sound of a bell is pretty ridiculous, at least to us humans. But that is precisely my argument. Is it not ridiculous to sweat when writing an exam, or to get a headache about that neighbor kid, or to panic as a police car flashes you to the curb, with its familiar and complex physiological sequel.

However, there's a great deal more to be said about the salivation story. The *new* stimulus had to be

something the dog could sense, i.e., it had to derive only from among the *physical* energies of mechanics, heat, photonics, chemistry or electricity. In Pavlov's experiment the sound was mechanical energy. Whatever the behavioral response, it must have been in the dog's response repertoire *before* the conditioning; new behavior is not created. The response to a specific stimulus may be new, but the behavior itself has been a natural function and presumably will persist in its usual matrix, as well as the new. Dogs normally salivate, and emotion causes perspiration, and headaches develop from a host of physiological imbalances.

It is a truism that conditioned responses are in the general category of autonomic or involuntary action. They are closely tied to our basic physiology and usually are neither cognitive nor abstract. It follows that if man is to be exploited by way of the various modes of classical conditioning, he may be made miserable, but not criminal; he may be made comfortable, but not saintly. His conditioned responses are neither more nor less than his ordinary and vital functions.

When conditioning does occur, the responses are always less in quantity or intensity than the natural unconditioned responses. If meat powder produces an increase of two cubic centimeters of saliva, the sound of the bell, following the period of conditioning, will produce somewhat less than two. If there are multiple responses for an unconditioned stimulus, then the conditioned stimulus will produce not only less, but the responses are likely to be fractional. Thus, there is a decrement in quantity and quality, so that the results, even when successful, are diminished.

Seldom mentioned is the chagrin of the experimenter in guessing when the intended conditioning has been achieved. How many trials of bell and meat powder sequencing must be programmed before the

bell alone will elicit salivation? A premature termination results in teaching the dog *not* to salivate at the bell sound, and persisting too long may sate the animal and produce a behavioral reaction. The optimum number of pairings is not easily come by. With humans, *ipso facto*, the chance of error is even greater; sometimes but a few pairings are sufficient, and sometimes hundreds are not enough, as in the attempt to condition the eye-blink.

Of major importance is the time lapse between the stimuli of bell and meat. If it is simultaneous, or if it is unduly spaced, or if the sequence is reversed, the resultant response is so unpredictable, so variant, and so uncontrolled as to be lacking in scientific value.

What I have tried to adduce is that *although environmental control over a passive, or even involuntary, subject is possible, it is difficult to arrange, and the type of response is very limited.* Acceptable control and prediction, as classical conditioning methods, do not yield to the demagogue or to the savior the sure deliverance of mankind.

II

The second paradigm for control is called operant or instrumental learning. As before, the environment provides a stimulus, but it is applied *after* a behavior has occurred, so that, in effect, the stimulus acts as a reinforcer or punisher or rewarder. The behavior precedes and is quickly followed by appetitive or aversive stimuli to link the behavior to positive or negative consequences. But it must be noted that there is no environmental stimulus until the organism itself has initiated the behavior. Indeed, the subject may be coaxed, may be shown models, or placed in circumstances likely to lead to a specific behavior, but the act itself must originate *within* the organism as an internal motivation.

This kind of training manipulation is fraught with multiple technicalities. In animal laboratories electro-mechanical machines monitor the organism so that if and when a specific behavior occurs, reinforcement is immediately forthcoming, but with human society this is neither convenient nor appropriate. And to miss giving the reinforcement, during training, is teaching that a specific behavior is *not* wanted.

To attack training negatively is to run the risk of pervasive side-effects. If all *unwanted* behavior is punished, in the hope the animal will be channeled into initiating what *is* wanted, much punishment will accrue and the result is apathy or neurosis. Characteristic of frustrated or neurotic animals, including men, is a narrowing of alternatives, the onset of fixations and a general stolidness. Punishment, by itself, not only is ineffective in behavioral control, but induces further debilitating side effects. Far more reliable is the system of ignoring the unwanted behavior and rewarding the wanted. Behavior is activity, even if it is "quiescent" like listening, and an organism must sense where and how to expend its biological energy. The suppression of this energy by punishment is unnatural, and as a result the duration of control is brief. In those instances when behavior is variable enough to include both wanted and unwanted action, and environmental stimuli regularly reward and punish, it is the *reward* that controls; the effects of punishment are usually temporary, generally unreliable, and most importantly, conducive to reaction.

Of course, rewards and punishments must be just that in the perception of the trainee. It is well known that some punishments in the eyes of the trainer are rewards in the eyes of the trainee and vice versa. Anyone associated with schooling knows that some disciplinary action may be perceived as a reward for

heroics, and that a teacher's praise may, by interpretation, stigmatize desired behavior.

Where respondent or classical conditioning controls basic biological processes, operant or instrumental learning most often attempts to control symbolic, value-laden, long-sequential and complex behaviors. In contemporary life-style, this complex process of socialization generally emphasizes linguistics and interpersonal relatedness. Hence is rare that anyone initiates such a full complex behavior before social stimuli tells him it is either acceptable or not acceptable. So the learning programmer shapes the behaviors as they approximate the desired constellations. Little rewards are administered to let the organism know he is on the right track, but he learns that he has got to do more, much more, if he wants the big reward. Subtle arts are required in the offering of just enough to be perceived as rewarding, and yet insufficient to be fully satisfying, or the resultant shaping will be either disrupted or completely terminated.

A fuller analysis of these mechanics demonstrates that the prospect of a tyranny or a utopia is not a fait accompli to the operant expert. As in classical conditioning, the only behavior subject to control is that which is stored neuro-muscularly. In addition, operant learning may be very complex and a desideratum for a society, yet none of it is controllable unless and until the subject choose to initiate these behaviors. If he does initiate a behavior, for whatever motivation, environmental control is tedious, it is technical and, most importantly for the subject and society, it is potentially abortive.

III

Adjunctive to the learning paradigms are the ancillary controls of sensory deprivation and hypnosis. Instead of environmentally manipulating stimuli,

sensory deprivation reduces, to varying degrees, all sensation. As noted earlier, one of the biological givens is that the organism is in a never-ceasing relationship to its milieu, through a living system that functions normally only as it senses the nature of that milieu. To deprive that system its function is to actuate brain cell assemblies characterized chiefly by a spontaneity and a randomness. These symptoms, whether after minutes or hours, exacerbate faster as deprivation continues, and soon mimic the advanced psychotic states. The organism becomes both disoriented and disorganized, suffers delusions and hallucinations, and manifests a measurable decline in I.Q. At this transient point, *simple* controls are effective. It is provisional because a restoration of even the blandest stimuli quickly reduces the symptoms and modality is regained. The severity of depersonalization engendered by sensory deprivation precludes complex behavior, and thereby controls, other than over the most artless, are ineffectual. Only if zombiism is a sufficient product, and if the rigorous physical requirements are met, can this environmental control be real and applicable.

Hypnosis, the second of the ancillary controls, has much greater apparent success in fiction than in practice. Even for the one-fourth to one-third who can be deeply entranced, the only behavior elicitable is that which is in the subject's repertoire. Introducing new behavior into that repertoire is possible if the basic personality concurs, but if the activity is perceived as repugnant or reprehensible the person either fails to respond or slips out of hypnosis. Achievements through hypnosis are best when accompanied by a forthright cooperation. After having stated this we must conclude that *neither hypnosis nor sensory deprivation can serve as effective tools of control.*

IV

Without impugning the case for lawfulness, it can be noted that a law is an observable uniformity—and only that. If certain conditions prevail, certain outcomes are likely. But the uniformity of outcome is seldom absolute, or 100 out of 100 occurrences, even in the “exact” sciences. General problems with unknown or uncontrollable variables and imprecise measurability, and such specific problems as the Heisenberg Uncertainty Relation make laws probabilistic, leaving some occurrences inexplicable. There are sharp controversies about what this means, but it is generally conceded that discrepancy does exist and to that extent the discovered laws fail to be absolute. Despite this, control and predication can be accurate in say, ninety-five or ninety-nine percent of the cases. And while these comfortable percents of accuracy are there, our continuing question is *which* of the cases are going to fall within that few percent that defy our tables of probability. And, of course, it is that most unstable and most unpredictable of organisms, *homo sapiens*, that, rationally or not, claims that exception, that freedom from lawfulness.

For this reason, degrees of freedom and of will in human behavior enhance the complexities that are the objects of control and thus frustrate hopes of high probability. Generally, then, it follows that a high probability is present only in patterns of simple behavior. For this reason, a great deal of first-rate experimentation is with infinitesimal detail, and is largely of interest only to the superspecialist. The complex behaviors that critically warrant lawful study have disappointingly low order of probability. Consider in this connection such vital concerns as creativity or faith or prestige or love. As result, lawful control has been most successful, statistically, in modifying only certain well-defined and isolated behaviors such as tics,

nail-biting and the assorted phobias and manias. Wherever social control has been attempted, and these attempts include such familiar modes as brainwashing, propaganda, education, and religion, the resulting alterations have not been macro, but micro. In psychology we see this reflected in the uneven volume of laws produced by the Behaviorist as contrasted with the Gestaltist.

Perhaps the most substantive article of the lawful statement is the explicit recognition of freedom in the table of givens. Let us assume all the positive features of behavioral control, high probability, well-defined behavioral objectives, highly skillful technique, and, not to be ignored, lucky contingencies. As scientific endeavor, it must be kept in mind, the manipulation is only successful if all required conditions are met. Clearly, the over-all paradigm is one of “if...then.” Results can not be predicted when the input is not precise, is not neat and is not contaminated, whatever the quality of a law. The endless contingencies of “ifs” must offer an array of “thens,” allowing many choices of alternate laws, or even the negation of all lawfulness.

In our concern with human behavioral laws, the various if-conditions may be classed in three ways:

- 1) An environmentalist controls the subject by controlling all the “ifs.”
- 2) The subject accepts the controls, either acquiescing or cooperating actively in his own control.
- 3) The subject controls himself, and is controlled by the givens of his own nature.

In the first class the burden of assembling all the required conditions for environmental manipulation lies beyond the subject, but what can be attained is

limited under classical conditioning. Thus freedom and a limited determinism are at a stand-off.

In the second class, cooperating with the controller, lies the opportunity for complex social control; the directives of others become acceptable enough to allow their implementation through modification of behavior. We know well the time-tested, conventional inducements of money, status, and power as symbolic rewards, and the resultant better housing, better food, better recreation for those living closer to the senses. But we also know of the seemingly perverse rejection by society's "eccentrics" of these rewards, and hence of the aloofness from environmental control, even to the extremes of poverty, imprisonment and death. Underlying in the most profound way this system of operant learning is the truth that *we are only manipulated and controlled by others when we covet their prizes*, whether they be kudos, wealth, or security. Since this is the paradigm inherent in socially and politically complex behaviors, we are free to reject, but only if we reject the whole, lawful, manipulative "if . . . then," rejecting the rewards as well as the behaviors. Perhaps a few of the lucky or Machiavellian may both have their cake and eat it, but for most of us, once we buy into that reward-value, the risk of lawful control becomes a probability. Certainly all controls are not deleterious and many are obviously beneficial; but we have no justifiable complaint, under operant conditioning, if we are being maneuvered. But if we do consciously want out, we do not buy a *controller's* lure; we buy from the indifferent or the disinterested, or we do not buy at all.

The third class of control, that of the self control implicit in our human nature, is the equating of self determination with freedom. There is no reason why we should not exploit psychological laws to our own advantage, and indeed, many of us do. We can arrange

our living to incorporate the "if . . . then," and create the rewards, payable to ourselves. In the social matrix, however, we are still pressured by the other two control classes.

An issue exposed by self control and freedom is the relationship between behavior and human nature, an issue ill-defined because human nature itself is ill-defined. If human nature is simply the total of human behavior then all that has been said about behavior is applicable to nature. If human nature is more than behavior, something more replete, then behavioral manipulation and freedom must be judged in this larger context.

Historians have recorded for us their perceptions of the grand and simple attempts at environmental manipulating and yet empirical evidence seems to suggest that this fuller human nature has remained a constant. History, of course, is a great experiment, but uncontrolled, so conclusions must be tentative and heuristic. We have learned, for example, that the sought-for behavior modifications of the French and the Russian Revolutions, with all of the iron control and blood drama, have not altered the basic qualities of humans, those qualities, for instance, of predilection, and the proclivity for predicament and for provocation.

With little more precision, studies of human change resulting from long-term and intensive psychotherapy seem to indicate that while certain behaviors may be altered, the fundamental nature remains resistant. The significance appears to be that our constituted nature protects us from massive alterations, denying to us personally, and to our manipulators, any but the smallest freedoms. That is, the quality of our nature compels us to be resistant to modification, but our freedom from nature's control is specious and deceptive. *Except in behaviors uncomplicated and*

adroitly circumscribed, control is only functional with consent, but in that degree, lawful behavior does preclude freedom of choice among the alternatives allowed by nature.

V.

A systematic and persistent reluctance to sharpen and advance salutary behavioral principles, and to enlist their social utility can not be justified by the fear of imposing individual bondage. In ignorance and fear we may only have been depriving ourselves of social gain, of values needful. In every time and in every place, man has attempted a cohesive whole, whether called family, tribe, nation, or humankind. Conceding that the creation of utopias may be presumptuous, and that tyrannies will not endure, should we not, in this era of environmentalism, assuage our condition by lawful or high probability discoveries.

If we gather at this place to learn, I cannot think we should be reluctant or apologetic about manipulating to that end. The rules for cognitive and affective acquisition, retention, and expression are not absolute, but they can function at high probability, and all of us freely can abstain. With consent, or self-control, nearly everyone can learn, and may even find the process alluring. But failure, worry, malaise are symptoms of learning principle misuse or disuse. However, if we seek the benefits of laws, we cannot, in our pursuit of them, be either slovenly or ignorant. As was noted earlier, there are a great many intricacies and skills to be mastered. But then, that mastery is the essence of our profession, the name of our "game."

Once we utilize with vigor and luck the teaching-learning principles, our major purpose becomes one of invalidating the expectations of those bad outcomes that interfere with the efficiency of these learning laws. This can best be facilitated by unfettered psyches in

an ambience of human worth, imbued throughout with mutual support and trust. Despite all the shortcomings, and even the deleterious possibilities, of lawful behavior, the present, with rapid reformations and ferment, is not the time to abandon or ignore a way to utilize learning. Admittedly, there is risk, but also there is the opportunity for gain. *Limited by our own natures and the general demands of our cooperation, we can be encouraged to feel immune from the manipulations that threaten, and for all of those manipulations that seem palliative, we can engage lawfulness.* And, happily, the cost lies not so much in the expenditures of time and money as it does in skill, consent, and commitment.

Nursed into a life that is very enigmatic, where motive is very arcane, where freedom and lawfulness are uncertain, the quests of man reflect this blurring, but also reflect man's hope for personal and social integrity. With his characteristic insight Bertrand Russell more than forty years ago eloquently expressed the theses I have been attempting today:

Brief and powerless is man's life; on him and all his race the slow, sure doom falls pitiless and dark. Blind to good and evil, reckless of destruction, omnipotent matter rolls on its relentless way; for Man, condemned today to lose his dearest, tomorrow himself to pass through the gate of darkness, it remains only to cherish, ere yet the blow falls, the lofty thoughts that enoble his little day; disdain the coward terrors of the slave of Fate, to worship at the shrine that his own hands have built; undismayed by the empire of chance, to preserve a mind free from wanton tyranny that rules his outward life; proudly defiant of the irresistible forces that tolerate, for a moment, his knowledge and his condemnation, to sustain alone, a weary, but unyielding Atlas, the world that his own ideals have fashioned despite the trampling march of unconscious power.

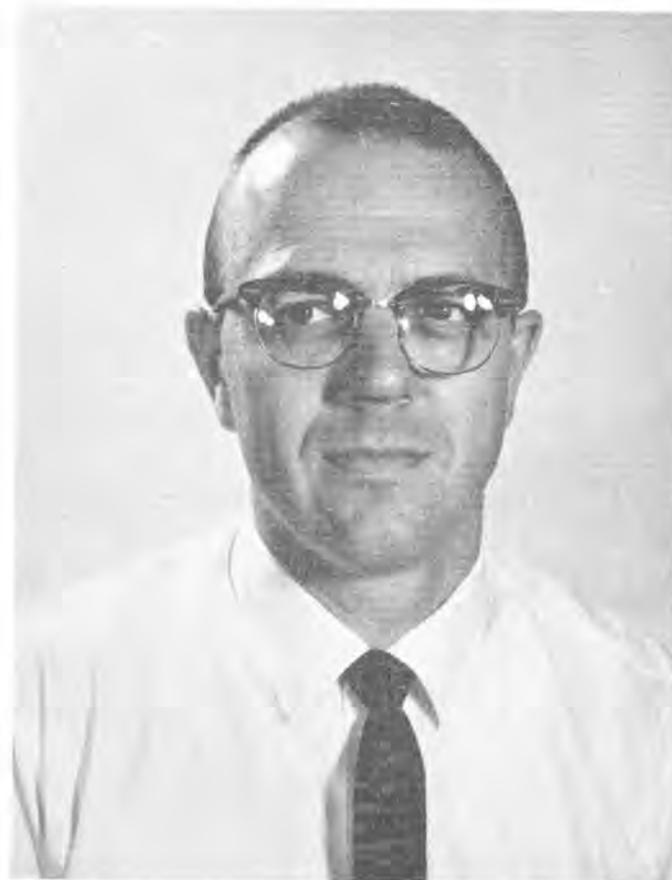
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Prof. Schneider taught at Carthage College before coming to Riverside. He is the holder of the standard teaching and counseling credentials, and he also has a state license in child, marriage, and family counseling. He was selected by the American Library Association as a consultant to help compile its book recommendations in psychology for junior college libraries.

A National Science Foundation grant permitted Schneider to travel to Wisconsin in 1964 to take part in a nine-weeks session in psychology. He was one of thirty from throughout the country to participate in the workshop.

In addition to serving as chairman of the Social Science division, Schneider has been a member of the Curriculum Committee, Faculty Senate, and the College Council.



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