

Completed files in Sections A and C in BLOCK LETTERS and include this sheet each time an assignment is submitted.

2/2

SECTION A

Course 423

21 Mar

DATE

Assignment No. 1

Assignment Title Man: Agent or Puppet.

Student (Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms) Pugh

SURNAME

D.E.

INITIALS

779078

STUDENT NO.

Tutor NAME (BLOCK LETTERS)

SECTION B

TUTOR'S COMMENTS

See attached cover-sheet.

Assessment

Tutor's Signature

Date

Pugh

12/4/77

Note to Tutor: When this section is completed, please return to External Studies Unit with assignment.

SECTION C

NAME

Don Pugh

Student's Name

ADDRESS

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Claremont 6010, Perth,

and Address

for Return Mail.



MURDOCH
UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

ASSIGNMENT COVER SHEET

Name of Student:

Don.

Course (by number code):

Date:

/ /

Tutor's Name:

STUDENT TO FILL IN THESE PANELS

TOPIC:



ITEMISED RATING SCALE



SUBSTANCE

SUBSTANCE

- Topic clearly understood
- All aspects of topic dealt with
- Considerable original and creative thought

- Topic misunderstood
- Many aspects of topic neglected
- Little evidence of original thought

↖ tends to → ↗

✓							
✓							
✓							

RESEARCH

RESEARCH

- Well aware of relevant research literature
- Citations adequate and appropriate
- Good critical understanding of authors referred to

- No evidence of relevant wider reading
- Citations unsatisfactory or inappropriate
- Uncritical acceptance of viewpoints expressed by others

✓✓							
✓							
✓							

LOGIC

LOGIC

- Concepts and types of discourse clearly perceived
- Uses reasoned argument
- Essay follows a logical order of development

- Concepts and types of discourse muddled
- Relies on bald assertion
- Essay rambles and lacks structure

✓							
✓							
✓							

PRESENTATION

PRESENTATION

- Sentences grammatical and easy to follow
- Legible clean copy
- Referencing format consistent with School requirements

- Sentences ungrammatical and hard to decode
- Untidy and often illegible copy
- Referencing format at variance with School requirements

✓							
✓							
✓							

OTHER COMMENTS, IF ANY:

Well researched, expressed and argued.
See remarks in essay.

Brian

ASSESSOR

KEY:
4 = Outstanding overall
3 = Several strengths, a few weak points

2 = Satisfactory, but several weak points

1 = Too many faults, a few good features
0 = Inadequate overall

GENERAL ASSESSMENT

4-

Donald E. Pugh.

Philosophy of Education.

Man: Agent or Puppet.

Phil. 423.

School of Education.

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1.

INTRODUCTION:

One of today's contentions remains the traditional philosophical dualistic conflict between the role of man's body and his mind. Man is part of nature and shares the biological drives and instincts of some animals, yet is different from animals in his development of a more highly developed consciousness, an awareness of his consciousness, and a communications system based on symbols. The issue between humanists and behaviourists is a complex one. Can man's behaviour be both predicted and controlled by a study of his external behaviour in its relationship to stimuli or events, or is man a self-determining being who may exercise freedom and choice of action based on his cognitive processes, unconnected with environmental factors?

BEHAVIOURISM:

Many psychologists recognize man's conscious mental state and accept the idea that man has inner emotions, images, ideas, plans, and motivations which influence his behaviour. They are willing to use introspective reports by patients as objective data on which to base psychological theories as to causes of human behaviour. (Kendler, 1971, 35) (Nagel, 1961, pp. 477-480.) For instance, the creator of modern psycho-analysis, Sigmund Freud delved into man's unconscious mind to provide theories as to how actions came from the unconscious as well as conscious mental processes. (Wolman, 1960. 19)

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However, extreme behaviourists such as B. F. Skinner argue that man's mental processes are unobservable to other people, cannot be studied experimentally to any advantage, and do not explain why people behave as they do. (Kendler, 1976, 35) The only method useful in controlling human behaviour, Skinner argues, is methodological behaviourism; a belief that the scientist, completely avoiding mental processes, should only look at overt physical behaviour which can be publicly observed. (Skinner, 1974, 14) Skinner's process is a functional empirical inductive one, which relies on laboratory observation of the relation of organisms to a controlled environment and describes rather than explains the data.

Skinner describes as respondent behaviour, actions related to a specific eliciting stimuli. (Rich, 1971, 18) Operant conditioning is a more important source of behavioural control. When an organism initiates behaviour with no stimuli present and the behaviour is followed by a contingent event, the organism increases or decreases the probability of repeating the behaviour depending on the positive or negative reinforcing or rewarding aspects of the event. Indeed, intermittent reinforcement may sustain certain behaviours for a long time with little return. (Skinner, 1974, 61) Skinner's positivist approach, based on sensory observations, and his identification and classification of the data, leads to statements of ^a general law. All
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behaviour was regarded as externally caused and externally controlled by contingent reinforcement and could be controlled by manipulating the environment.

HUMANISM:

Skinner's conception of man as a puppet of environmental events challenges the very essence of humanistic democracy. As Ubrich (1966, 13) has noted, every description of an event which has partly shaped man's behaviour leaves less to be credited to man himself. His creative, appreciative powers, purposes, capacity to choose, and responsibilities for consequences are not obvious. Nor does behaviourism recognize man's ability to initiate action, make spontaneous changes or recognize moral obligations. Man's inner nature, his soul or spirit, which Christians regard as of fundamental importance, is passed over as irrelevant, so that man's intrinsic worth, his dignity, rights and power to govern himself are eclipsed.

In opposition to Skinner stands the humanists who affirm that between the stimulus and the response there is a unique rational being. Such a being consciously exists as an end in himself, strives to realize his potential as a distinct valuable human being, and is aware of exercising freedom to examine stimulus or contingent events, to

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believes he has
related you in
Beyond Freedom
and Dignity
and the novel
Walden Two -
see May-June
Skinner's article
in your text
by Wash.

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reflect, and to choose autonomously according to his morals, or goals. Humanists see man as unique in his ability to use symbols to express ideas and ideals, and to pass on knowledge. Symbols permit man to reason at higher levels, and to create new knowledge by the combination of separately perceived symbols. (Henderson, 1947, 55)
sometimes
Humanists, argue that social sciences are exempt from the scientific method due to the variability and complexity of human nature and society. (O'Connor, 1958, 9)

Different philosophers saw human behaviour as the output of different mental processes. A brief review will give some conception as to the range of humanist beliefs as they stand in opposition to the determinism of behaviourism.

James Mill, John Locke and David Hume saw behaviour as the product of a mental process which associated ideas. (Wolman, 1960, 18)
Kierkegaard, father of the existential philosophy, believed man to be an existing, knowing, conscious spirit with freedom to make choices based on subjective spiritual values, and supreme within his own right to make himself what he will be. (Hill, 1973, 26) (Kneller, 1958, 11)

Karl Marx, creator of the Communist philosophy, saw man, like Skinner, as product of the social environment. However, human needs could cause man to change his nature and to realize his true humanity and uniqueness by changing the external world. (Nash, 1967, 286)

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Friedrich Nietzsche affirmed that men with superior talent would exercise a will to power to gain self determination and self-assertion.

John Dewey accepted the pragmatist approach that action preceded knowledge, but saw thinking and reason as instruments adjusting man to life and to survival. Dewey clarified the thinking process by illustrating how imagination, combined with experience could originate, test and verify new hypotheses that led to overall growth. (Hill, 1973, 138) (Nash, 1967, 305)

Reinhold Niebuhr saw the genuine individuality of man as being his transcendental ability. This was his ability to stand outside of nature, life, himself and the world and to judge good, evil, and the value of human life rationally. (Niebuhr, 1941 Passim & 58)

IN FAVOUR OF INNER CAUSES: A. AUTONOMY.

The conflict apparent between the behaviourist and humanist views is thus clearly presented. The humanist view tends to be the more compromising one, however, in its acceptance of the role of the environment, society, the family, heredity, character and habit as factors influencing the behaviour of human beings. (Ryan, 1934, 259) Humanists agree that one can estimate how man will ordinarily act but affirm that the estimate logically is not infallible in an infinite number of predictions because of man's autonomy.

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Reardon defines autonomy as having a mind of ones own and acting according to it. (Brown, 1975, 7) Contingent events may influence decisions, but autonomous people independently conceive their own goals, policies and plans, and independently choose among alternatives to further their ideas. B. F. Skinner, of course, overlooks motives, or ideas and simply compares external behaviour to contingent antecedent conditions. Skinner's view, however, begs the question. If one's action is determined by an external event, what is to stop the individual from controlling the contingent events that control his behaviour. Skinner might argue that action taken to control contingent events itself depends on contingent events. Such an argument progresses indefinitely and does not answer the question. Does the individual control contingent events or do they control him?

Herbert Feigl (1953-773) is perhaps correct in seeing freedom as acting according to one's strongest motive at the time without compulsion. Yet surely existentialists must be correct in their assertion that man is ^{wholly?} free to pick the environment that will influence his way of thinking and ultimately the responsibility for one's development rests on oneself alone.

Ryan (1934, 233) presents further arguments on behalf of self-determination.

(1) Man can distinguish acts that are not free from those which

He does.
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is manifestly
controlled by many
contingent events
from which itself
is awareness.
The minimum of
Skinner's kind
is it necessarily
remitted by an
infinite regress
of argument.*

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are free.

(2) One can consciously concentrate on any element in the mind at random and carry out an action based on that concentration.

(3) By failure to be exposed to self-determined, spontaneous activity, one can recognize this activity upon exposure.

(4) Jeffreys (1957, 50) presents a fourth argument, taken from Niebuhr, that one may mentally transcend time and alter ones interpretations and value of a series of past events, without reference to an immediate, contingent event. The mind can arrange events logically or in any sequence, and it is the mind's interpretation of these events in any fashion whatsoever, not the events themselves, that determine future behaviour. Consequently, ^{for instance,} aversive reinforcement in the form of torture may strengthen a person's resolve not to speak.

Jeffreys (1957, 77) (Ryle, 1963, 67) also notes that the concept of determinism destroys the meaning of responsibility and morality. If events control one's actions, how can one be blamed for doing wrong. Yet if one may order events in such a way as to lead to responsible action, then it is the inner mental process which is determining behaviour in the ultimate sense, not the events themselves.

B. CAUSALITY.

B. F. Skinner refuses to say that a cause generates an effect, but rather follows David Hume's theory (Pap, 1949, 204) that a cause is usually seen in conjunction with an effect. Here the contingent

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cause has no logical generative power or connection with the behaviour. (Harré, 1976, 117) Operant behaviour, which suggests that behaviour may be controlled by contingent stimuli, cannot be proven logically according to Skinner's causality theory.

Skinner also refuses to relate human reasons as purposes for external behaviour, (1974, 130) although as Davidson has pointed out, 'a reason for an action is its cause.' (1963, 685) (Hill, 1972, 237)

But the problem remains. Does the reason cause or only accompany the response.

C. INDUCTIVE REASONING.

B. F. Skinner argues inductively from particular facts to general laws. However, the theory of operant conditioning cannot be proven in this way since there is always the possibility that a particular fact may not agree with the law. Furthermore, as Harré (1976, 117) notes, many laws may be inferred from any known form of induction from a set of facts. Although the principle of simplicity may be used to find out which law is correct, there may be infinitely many laws of equal simplicity.

D. CONSCIOUSNESS, MOTIVATION, EMOTIONS.

For B. F. Skinner, consciousness is an awareness of external stimuli, and the unconsciousness is the unknown relationship between behaviour and the stimuli. (1974, 153) This definition is too simplistic as evidenced by Skinner's examination of repression. Defined as "very strong behaviour" because it cannot be emitted without

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aversive stimuli, Skinner is postulating a mental state. How can one know that the behaviour is strong, according to Skinner's criteria, unless it is emitted.

Similarly, Skinner's discussion of drive in terms of deprivation, is unsatisfactory. Drive is a positive concept implying working towards a positive end, such as education. Deprivation will not necessarily strengthen such a drive. Skinner's description that inner emotions such as joy or frustration follow behaviour rather than precede, is also questionable. One feels anxiety prior to achieving a goal. Skinner does not regard anxiety as an emotion, but this distinction seems artificial.

E. GOALS.

The Skinnerian analysis cannot admit human goals. (Supra p. 6)
If every behaviour is preceded by contingent events influencing the behaviour, then goals emerge as only the random workings of the environment. Only through a belief in such inner agents as rationality and choice, can one see man as planning his own future. (cf: Hill, 1972, 240ff)

F. KNOWLEDGE:

Skinner's understanding of verbal behaviour also raises problems. Language reduced to antecedent responses, relates not to what one says, but when one says it in relationship to stimuli. Yet 'he eats' is not the same as 'he is hungry' for one may eat for many reasons.

10.

In summary, there appears to be definite weaknesses in B. F. Skinner's theory that the causes of human behaviour may be determined totally from external contingent events without reference to man's inner consciousness. Not only can this theory not be logically proven, but the nature of human language, morals, and consciousness mitigates against it.

A nicely
critiques
summing up.

A TEACHER-ORIENTED ANALYSIS:

Both behaviouristic and humanistic approaches to education suggest positive ideas for the classroom teacher. In spite of the criticisms of behaviourism as overlooking man's inner state, the science is a highly useful approach *in* modifying student behaviour. Positive reinforcement of desirable student behaviour is much more effective in improving the probability of its occurrence, than the application of negative reinforcement for undesirable behaviour. Consequently, ignoring a student when he is misbehaving, but praising him for well done work is an useful approach for developing rapport with the student and for improving his behaviour. Environmental arrangements of contingencies to create interest, provide encouragement and instil purposes are the solutions to classroom control.

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To reach an understanding of the aims of education, and of the ultimate goals towards which a teacher ought to work, it is essential to examine humanistic philosophies of education. Some humanistic approaches have already been summarized. A teacher may adopt the existential stress on an individual's autonomy, or concentrate on a

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goal of the successful growth of the whole individual. The humanistic philosophy chosen does not matter, as long as the teacher obtains a clear rational normative picture as to his role in the classroom.

Herein lies the importance of the teacher's recognition of the unique qualities of man and the roles of man's inner being.

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