

Review -- Atheism / godlessness

Murray: academy: explain

Marketplace: make a living

Marxism: transforms

Theatre: absurd

6. Broken image of humanity in social sciences.

1. The ~~onto~~ natural science model:

mechanist determinism

- a. the Great Machine
- b. mind as mechanism
- c. human science based on this model

2. The alienated machine: Behaviorist

Psychology

- a. John B. Watson
- b. Clark Hull
- c. B. F. Skinner

3. Behaviorism's solution to the ~~further~~
existential problem of modern man

The sixth theme of modern culture has been that of the broken image of humanity in ~~contantine~~, especially as this is both conveyed by and contributed to by the "social sciences." When I call this image broken, I am obviously giving an interpretation. Many sociologists and behavioral theorists will advocate the position I am here criticizing. The problem appears immediately: their "science" cannot account for their advocacy. Flavor gained by dealing w. I e.g. natural science

- 1. The model of mechanist determinism : the background example
- 2. The alienated machine : behaviorist psychology as ~~contemporary of~~
- 3. The manipulated society : will have to skip.

Modern natural science has experienced two major and quite different orientations, and both of these have had an impact on the human sciences. Today we are concerned with the first of these and with its influence on the image of the human person that emerges when human sciences presume this model in their study of the individual and society. The second Model ~~will also be a major theme~~ ^{is related to the} our next class, when we treat of the theme of liberation, although the precise relation remains to be determined.

a. The reigning world view that emerged from the natural sciences prior to the 20th century was the model of mechanist determinism. It understands or, better, imagines the world as a universe of perfect symmetry, order, precision: as a Great Machine. The world had a thoroughly determinate course, and so, at least in principle, its future could be perfectly predicted ~~and controlled~~: if only man could arrive at a knowledge of all the laws that determined its events and of how these laws were related to one another. Man was nothing but an observer of this thoroughly determined universe, this perpetual motion machine.

One of the major features of this universe, as known by modern

Science, is that it was devoid of all purpose. If it had any purpose, any finality, any goal, science could not know it. In the poet John Donne expressed it, "All just supply, and all Relation." ^{also,} All knowable reality was reduced to the state of objective mechanism: only the primary qualities of number, figure, magnitude, position and motion were real, i.e., in the object "out there," whereas all else which the sense perceive or the mind constructs were unreal, just appearance: taste, smells, colors were just names, they resided only in us. If you remove us and other animals, these qualities

are also removed. What is to guarantee, then, that we not distort science's picture?

b. The only way to make sure that we are not introducing our own perceptions, then, is to remove us, to turn us also into insentient bodies, into mechanisms. We are just spectators of a vast mathematical system whose regular motions according to mechanical principles constitute the world of nature. The world we thought we lived in -- a world rich with color and sound and fragrance, filled with gladness, love, and beauty, was just real in our brains. The real world out there was hard, cold, colorless, silent, dead.

Nonetheless, most people who were really convinced of this world view were not discouraged by it, but rather inspired to the hope that if we could learn the laws of the Great Machine, if we could unlock its secrets, we could control it. Precise measurement and calculation could give us a mastery over nature. But first we had to rid ourselves of the illusion that the real world out there was anything but matter in motion. The human mind plays no part in it, ^{distinct as something different.} It is a world governed by a universal mechanics with no purpose or spiritual significance. And the same is true of the mind of man. Mind and thought were reducible to the motions of an animal organism. ^{The best way to insure this was to extend it to the mind.} They ^{were} too ~~was~~ subject to objective measurement and mechanistic explanation.

Purpose, finality, teleology were excluded from the human mind as well as from the rest of nature. Free will was an illusion, the emotions were to be explained as natural phenomena following nature's laws. Spinoza: "I shall consider human actions and desires in exactly the same manner as though I were concerned with lines, planes, and solids." We become truly free only by acquiescing to the laws of nature. All that is subjective, intangible, passionate, and personal is unreal, appearance, illusion. The same held for the laws of society and economics: human societies were vast geometrical constructions operating strictly in accord with immutable natural laws; economics was governed by iron-clad laws that could not be changed by man. All fields of knowledge were reduced to the dimensions and categories of natural science.

NEGLECT OF SUBJECT.

The basic meaning, for our purposes, of this world view is that human beings have been expelled from the world as subjects and have reappeared as objects. Humanity is not only subordinated to but absorbed within the Great Machine. The human organism is an automatic clock, and one can comprehend the full range of human behavior by coming to a knowledge of the clockwork. Human beings are the pawns of forces set in motion at the beginning of time. Holbach: "If man believes himself free, he is merely exhibiting a dangerous delusion and an intellectual weakness. It is the structure of the atoms that forms him, and their motion propels him forward; conditions not dependent on him determine his nature and direct his fate."

c. The beginnings of a human science based on this conception can be found in the 17th and 18th centuries. Hartley, the 1st Englishman to use the word "psychology" for his subject matter, sought through discovery of the laws of association to inaugurate a science of behavior that would be purely and simply an extension of physics. The life of the mind

is to be explained as a physical and chemical process, completely governed by the laws of physics & chemistry. In the 19th century, the same thing happened in the social sciences: neutral objectivity and analytic reductionism were the methodological principles also for the study of society. Society was to be made over in the image of mechanics, technically rationalized in every detail, predictable in every activity, brought under total scientific management. Human beings are social atoms governed by the mechanical springs of human action -- the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain. Human behavior could be conditioned by a calculus of pleasure and pain. Social relations and economic transactions were to be understood as balanced by natural forces and biological conditions, totally independent of human effort and freedom. Today, the structuralism of Lévi-Strauss.

2. The Alienated Machine: Behaviorist Psychology.

The ^{primary} modern-day successor of this attempt to eliminate the human being as subject and reintroduce him as object is behaviorism. The spirit of behaviorism is exemplified in the following two quotations:

- B. F. Skinner: "The hypothesis that man is not free is essential to the application of scientific method to the study of human behavior."
- John B. Watson: "In short, the cry of the ~~the~~ behaviorist is, 'Give me the baby and my world to bring it up in and I'll make it crawl and walk; I'll make it climb and use its hands in constructing buildings of stone or wood; I'll make it a thief, a gunman, or a dope fiend. The possibility of shaping in any direction is almost endless.'

Watson: The basic postulate of behaviorism's method is that all concern with consciousness and introspection is scientifically meaningless. The facts of any science, including human science, are solely those gathered through external observation. The inner life is scientifically inaccessible and irrelevant. The consequence, experimentally, is that rats, cats,

Chickens, and chimpanzees can be studied experimentally to give rise to knowledge of the laws that govern human behavior. In such experimentation, Pavlov discovered the conditioned reflex, and this discovery opened the door to the claim that human behavior could be not only totally explained but also predicted and controlled by the laws of stimulus and response. The data for the science of man are not such things as sensation, perception, images, desire, purpose, emotion, and thinking, for these cannot be externally observed. The data, as Watson put it, are what the organism says and does: not what the organism means or intends by his speech and action, but simply what he ^(or it) says and does. These data, without exception, are to be described in terms of stimulus and response. This holds for learned behavior as well as automatic behavior. But the fact that some behavior is learned, conditioned, means that human science is not merely a matter of description and explanation, but also of control and manipulation. The ^{human} scientist is also a ^{human} engineer; the possibility of shaping in any direction is almost endless.

To what end is behavior to be shaped? For Watson, the goal is individual adjustment and efficient performance within the socio-economic system. Thus behaviorism extends into child-rearing techniques, education, mass persuasion, industrial psychology: all of them engineering human response to the demands of the socioeconomic system. It is not institutions that are to be reformed to meet the needs of human beings, but human beings to meet the needs of institutions. The ruling norms are industrial efficiency and technical proficiency. Individual reason and freedom are irrelevant. The only rationality attaches to the system as a whole. Human beings gain their only meaning and purpose from their functional roles within the organization of society.

Clark Hull: The successor to Watson among behavioral psychologists was Clark Hull. For Hull, as for Watson, a genuine theory of human behavior requires the expulsion of all trace of "anthropomorphic subjectivism" -- i.e., of the

concerned with purpose, intent, etc.

presence of a valuing human observer. Human beh. is to be studied as a purely automatic cyclical operation: each cycle begins with the rise of a "need" and ends with its satisfaction. Purposeful behavior, involving intelligence and intent, is a purely secondary phenomenon, derived from elementary objective primary principles, from automatic mechanical processes, which are identical for men and animals. Hull proposed ~~two~~ two ways to gain proper objectivity in the study of human behavior:

a) think in terms of the behavior of subhuman organisms; 2) more effective yet, regard the behaving organism as a completely self-maintaining robot. Then one could effectively think of everything in terms of mechanical causes, and one could see that the difference between the physical and behavioral sciences is one not of kind but of degree. In this way, behavioral science could ambition a systematic mathematically-deductive theory of behavior, which would include all behavior, animal and human, individual and social, political and moral. Some of the items Hull envisioned including in this explanation are: language, symbolism, economic values, moral values, aesthetic values, family behavior, individual adaptive efficiency (intelligence), education, psychogenic disorders, delinquency, culture, religion, custom, law, government. The final product, the ultimate solution to all of human behavior, would consist of a master set of equations worked out by symbolic logic, a set of equations which would give the psychological scientist the same kind of predictive control over his subject matter -- us -- as physics had attained with respect to its subject matter. This predictive control would enable the psychologists to create a new and better world. No attempt was made to resolve the paradox: How can you look forward

to a new and better world brought about by a science that has systematically eliminated any consideration of values? The only answer, of course, is that the predictive control will be exercised by scientific experts who themselves are operating from value-assumptions that are reinterpreted as "givens," as "facts," and so are not subject to examination and challenge. The rest of us, then, cease to be subjects of our own operations, and become robot-like objects, passive means toward the ends determined by the scientific experts.

(BREAK)

Skinner has made no apologies for his claim to be the expert we've been looking for. He is bolder than either of the other two architects of behavioral psychology in contemplating an applied science aimed at the manipulation and control of human conduct. He wants not only to observe people behaving, he wants to make them behave. Even Watson does not go far enough for Skinner, because, while he does get rid of "mind," he still relies on hypotheses regarding such inner processes as the nervous system for his notion of behavior. For Skinner behavior is "simply the movement of an organism or of its parts in a frame of reference provided by the organism itself or by various external objects or fields of force." There is no room for concepts dealing with inner states: meaning, intent, understanding.

Skinner prefers the white rat to the robot as the ideal model for scientific experimentation, because here we see a living organism submitting to the experimental control of its drives and routines ~~for~~ of living. He admits certain minimal differences between the rat and a human being: it has poorer vision, its reactive capacities (hands, larynx) are defective. But it is similar to man, so that one may

freely engage in theoretical discussions of human behavior on the basis of experimentation on white rats. The goal, once again, is the effective prediction and control of human behavior. To control man is to control the future, and this is the ambition of behavioral psychology. The only assumption allowed in prosecuting this end is that behavior is lawful and determined. "What a man does is the result of specifiable conditions and... once these conditions have been discovered, we can anticipate and to some extent determine his actions." Negatively, this means the denial of man as a free agent capable of carrying out his own career and of resisting the mechanical laws of nature. We have to give up the habit of viewing behavior in terms of an inner agent, of looking inside the organism for explanations. The actual explanation of all behavior is in the environment. If we can control the environment, we can control man; if we can control man, we can control the future.

For what purposes are we to harness the powers of control afforded by science? As we saw, for Watson the answer was the status quo, the socio-economic system. For Skinner, the answer is put in different terms, but there is some question as to whether it is really different: the ultimate criterion of predictive control is the survival of the culture. Whatever behavior has survival value for the culture is good; whatever does not contribute to its survival is bad. The view here is long-range; it is not the "short-range" considerations of the individual's happiness, ^{or} freedom, justice, or knowledge, that are important, but the long-run survival of the culture.

Skinner's latest book, Beyond Freedom and Dignity, takes the next obvious step. Somebody has to know what is really contributive to the survival of the culture; somebody has to know what is the right kind of culture and make the decisions that will control everybody else's behavior in such a way as to further the "good;" somebody has to know what our "best interests" are: the behavioral scientist! B. F. Skinner! Modern man is not to rebel against behaviorism's denial of his freedom and dignity, not to regard the forward march of behavioral science as a juggernaut, but rather as a bandwagon: climb aboard while there is time. We will teach your children from birth to make the "right choices" without being burdened by the weight of freedom and responsibility. The government of our nation can be & should be controlled from behind the scenes by a group of Managers not selected by the people. Leave the control to the experts. They will redeem us from ourselves by reconstructing our society so that we need no longer question things and face our responsibility and subject the decisions of government to public discussion, to referenda, to elections. Not only is freedom abolished, but along with it one of its principal manifestations: politics. Politics too is an illusion; all human behavior follows mechanistic laws; let's simply discover them and make use of them to build a society no longer burdened by the greatest enemy of culture: human freedom, the myth of interiority, the ghost in the machine.

3. Into the tremendous gap, then, opened up by the modern knowledge-explosion, the gap that makes it so burdensome today to decide what one is to make of oneself, to choose among the vast array of possibilities for humanity, there marches the behaviorist with his temptingly simple answer: don't make anything of yourself,

give up the illusion that you have the freedom, the dignity, the responsibility, to make anything of yourself. Hop onto the behavioral bandwagon: let us make you, let us so control your environment that you will be conditioned to make the "right" responses, the responses that will have the greatest long-range influence on the establishment of a culture where men and women are dispossessed forever of the illusion that meaning and value, understanding and freedom, are real, objective determinants of the human world.

1 - How affected are we by social control?

- Career decisions: value?
or satisfaction?

2 - PRAXIS of beh. →
post-historic man

At length, it proved it such way to make it up
and still it did not fly, so I gave up and it got its return
soaring up before me. It was seen in the neighborhood
of another "flock" of about twelve or fifteen birds
of similar species, but they did not get together
in numbers and were scattered over a great number of fields and hillsides.
It was evident that the whole population had been gathered
to the south of the town at sunset last night.

Below I will say we stopped well in
England : because now I
anticipate no

+ do you
know what they