

*THE PROFESSIONAL AS A DOUBLE-AGENT*

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The joke about the Martian who lands on Earth in a bed of mushrooms and says, "Take me to your leader", reflects a fact well-known to many Earthlings and, apparently, to Martians as well: in every social system there are those who wield disproportionate control over the resources of that system. By making the availability of these resources contingent on behaviors they require, under conditions and in manners they also specify, they exert considerable influence over behaviors and conditions in the system. In a complex society such as ours, much of the control is filtered through subsidiary systems in direct line from their source. A complex society such as ours also contains professional systems. These generally function in circumscribed areas necessary for the functioning of the larger social system. Accordingly, the larger system will allocate resources, and use its powers in other ways (for example, state grants of monopoly through licences) in support of these subsystems. It will thereby enmesh much of the subsystem in its contingencies. It will set requirements for the maintenance of social support. The subsystem will set related requirements for its professionals. To the extent that this is the case, professional behaviors may be said to be a function of a function, that is, to be ultimately explainable by resort to the larger social contingencies. At different times, the requirements noted may vary in the degree of their explicitness, in the time peri-

ods in which the requirements are to be met, in the immediacy of evaluation, and so on.

Social and professional relations have been systematically studied for some time in fields such as economics, planning, political science, social thought and sociology, among others, and by nonacademic commentators and activists. Ideologies and patterns of systematized social analysis (including those just noted) have themselves been subjected to social contingency analysis. For example, in the sociology of knowledge (*cf.* Wirth, 1936), such systematization has been analyzed as derivative to and interacting with the regnant economic, political, and social contingencies.

Consider the case of programmed instruction (*p.i.*), a major scientific and technological contribution by radical behaviorists. The publication of Skinner's article in *Science* (1958) brought teaching machines to the attention of a wide and important audience. The article was one of a cluster of major articles on teaching, and especially on teaching of science. That year, the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) was enacted. Was this act in response to the intellectual activities mentioned, and in response to concern over education? Or did the articles, the discussions, and the concern reflect societal contingencies that become salient at that time?

In 1957, space was penetrated dramatically—by the Russians. Sputnik I went up. It was followed by Sputnik II. Mastery of space and of the relevant technology by our system thereby became a major goal. American behaviors in this direction included the founding of the National Aeronautic Space Administration (NASA), the NDEA, concern with and support of scientific manpower and training, and of education in gen-

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eral. The support of p.i. is clearly relatable to social contingencies.

Did these contingencies elicit or produce the behavioral technology of p.i. and the analytic system ("system of thought", "ideology") common to p.i. and radical behaviorism? Clearly not. Skinner and those around him had been engaged in p.i. for some time, and operant research and systematization even longer. The social system made available financial support and other resources for such research, and contingent upon it. It thereby increased the probability of this hitherto low-probability educational behavior. As noted elsewhere: "The statement, 'There is nothing as powerful as an idea whose time has come' translates into the power of an 'idea which rationalizes contingencies whose time has come' or increases their probability" (Goldiamond, 1974, pp. 11f).<sup>2</sup>

Social contingencies do not necessarily produce or elicit ideologies or specific components of social behavior. Rather, they may affect the probability of these available components, when they are emitted. They may thereby shape and alter them into completely novel patterns. The fact that a parallel can be drawn between, on the one hand, individual behavior components and their contingencies and, on the other hand, social behavior components and their social contingencies, suggests that analytic procedures of either area may be profitably extended to the analysis of the other (*cf.* Goldiamond, 1976a). "What is needed is a marriage of social analysis and behavior analysis" (Goldiamond, 1976b).

In this issue, Jim Holland (1978) applies one of the systematized methods of social analysis to the professional behaviors that behavior modifiers regard as helping, and to the professional role ideology that rationalizes their behaviors. Thereby, he consigns behavior modifiers to be-

ing part of the problem. He suggests that we apply our own area of expertise, behavior analysis, to problems on the social scene. He suggests that we shift the control of our behavior to other social contingencies. Thereby, behaviorism becomes part of his solution.

Currently, authors of an increasing number of books and studies have been applying social contingency analysis to health care.<sup>3</sup> In this context, they have been analyzing professional and patient roles and, indeed the very prevalence of the problems that the clients present, and which occasion professional treatment. In addition to setting up programs that produce beneficial change, "[s]ocial contingencies can also deteriorate the behaviors [of patients and of their physiological conditions so that] . . . deterioration is being programmed" (Goldiamond, 1976b, 129-130). In such cases, the long-term answer to the alleviation and attenuation of individual suffering obviously lies in attention to the regnant social contingencies. Indeed, even the *short-term* answer may then lie in attention to social contingencies, since attention to individual contingencies (those immediately governing individual behavior), no matter how skilled, may be ineffective. Individuals whose behavior does not yield to professional attention (because it is governed by other social contingencies, *e.g.*, an impending disability claim whose magnitude is contingent on magnitude of disability) may then be "described as 'unmotivated' or 'impossible to reach' or, in less charitable moments, 'goof-offs'" (p. 104), hostile, or resistant. The professionals involved may then lament the state of their art, or may instead "blame the victim" (Holland, 1978), rather than blame their own insensitivity to regnant societal variables. And the professionals and arts so involved are not confined to behavior modification, of course. It has been my experience that compared to other professionals dealing with similar problems, applied behavior

<sup>2</sup>The government of Argentina, concerned that population increase of its neighbors, accompanied by its own low birthrate, will become, in time, a temptation for invasion of Argentina, is conducting a campaign to get women into their homes. This includes support of appropriate social actions and of an ideology stressing sex differences.

<sup>3</sup>The social contingencies governing such increased intellectual effort are the same ones governing impending federal support of health insurance or its facsimiles.

analysts have been among the *more sensitive* to regnant societal variables. And there is very little blaming of the victims, or assignment of characterological deficit or flaw in the literature of behavior modification. On the contrary, the laboratory dictum that "the pigeon is always right" had tended to what is often a naively-accepted corollary that "the system is always wrong" in its training procedures, aims, *etc.* It would appear from Jim Holland's article that behavior analysts consider the pigeon wrong, and the system right. Other issues are raised.

1. With regard to alcoholism, he chastises behavior analysts by means of lengthy quotations and references to an investigator who is *not a behaviorist*. As is evident from designations in the published report (Mello and Mendelson, 1971, ix, 730), Gallant is a psychiatrist at Tulane. His interests have included placebo response by schizophrenics, dexedrine and sulphates with hyperactive children, alcoholic treatment services, among others. The views Jim Holland cites are not those of a behaviorist psychiatrist, but of one of a different persuasion. It is instructive to note how the presentation turns these views into an example of behaviorist formulations. 1. Gallant used antabuse, among other procedures, with alcoholics. 2. "Antabuse is a drug that induces severe nausea when alcohol is ingested. Hence, it is a form of aversion therapy" (p. 165). 3. Gallant is thereby a behaviorist: "Other behavior analysts" (p. 166, emphasis mine—I.G.) are then cited. Behaviorism is held accountable for his views. There is an interesting syllogistic fallacy here. 1. A psychoanalyst hands out M&M's to a child (or otherwise approves). 2. M&M's (or approval) have been used as reinforcers; this is a reinforcement procedure used by behavior analysts. 3. Therefore, behaviorists believe in Id, Ego, and Superego. Or, Texas ranchers use barbed wire; barbed wire hurts cattle that rub against it, they shun it, hence it is a form of aversion therapy; therefore behaviorists use alfalfa, vote for Reagan . . .<sup>4</sup>

Possibly, to return to alcoholics, skidrow alcoholics drink themselves blotto to escape a mis-

erable world they never made, and which a commercial culture did. However, alcoholism is a problem in the Soviet Union, and excessive use of hashish is a problem in certain feudal Muslim states, where alcohol is taboo. Contingencies of *positive* reinforcement often operate. Keehn, whose applied operant research is as insightful as his experimental and theoretical work, *observed* skidrow alcoholics. He noted that they had been cast out by their families and other social referent groups. Social acceptance seemed available only on skidrow, and the *required operant* for membership was drinking and getting blotto. The system that Keehn helped set up provided such a social referent group. Membership in it was contingent on other behaviors (Keehn, *et al.*, 1973; Collier and Somfay, 1974).

2. With regard to criminals, it was Anatole France who noted over 70 years ago (1903) that the law "in its majestic equality forbids the rich as well as the poor to sleep on the bridges, to beg on the streets, and to steal bread."<sup>5</sup> And we have also known for some time that the alternatives available to people, what alternatives are called criminal, what criminal acts are pursued, which violator gets incarcerated, and what sentences are meted out, are relatable to social class and influence. For those of us who have not kept up with such issues, Jim Holland's sketch brings us up to date. The problem has been with us for some time. It antedates behaviorism.

<sup>4</sup>Space considerations preclude discussion of other issues raised regarding use and nonuse of aversive procedures (page 165), but see another explanation for differential use offered in Rachman and Teasdale (1969, p. 172), namely, between "surplus disorders, and . . . deficit disorders". Yet other systematizations are possible which seek constructional alternatives to aversive and other eliminative procedures (Goldiamond, 1974), since behavior patterns of either type are then not systemized as pathologies or disorders. Even so, Rachman and Teasdale's conclusion is instructive: "Aversion therapy should only be offered if other treatment methods are inapplicable or unsuccessful *and* if the patient gives his permission after a consideration of all the information which his therapist can honestly supply" (p. 174, italics in original).

<sup>5</sup>Anatole France, *Le lys rouge*, 1903, Ch. VII, statement by M. Choulette.

It has been fashionable to apply behaviorist terminology to legitimize classical penal procedures. There is nothing new about "behavior treatment units" other than the name. Enforced isolation has been so designated. At one time it was called "solitary confinement", and at others "the hole". It may now be called "behavior control" or "timeout". And token economies in prisons are often as relevant to applied behavior analysis as dream analyses at cocktail parties are to psychoanalysis. A graded tier system at Patuxent was, *subsequent* to the establishment and implementation of the system, rationalized as behavioral, and attacked as such (Holland, 1975, p. 86). The gross violations, which occasioned court action, were also rationalized in terms of mental illness, and the director (not a behaviorist), in one interview, reported that *love* was the critical issue. If those engaged in "tinkering with . . . fictional mental causes" of crime are to "stop" (Holland, 1978, p. 00), I venture that few behaviorists will be found in the halted legion. But Jim Holland's article specifically enjoins "the behaviorist" from mental fictionalizing!

One more point will be made. Charles Manson spent over half his life behind institutional walls. He charged, and rightly, that his antisocial behaviors were the product of such socialization. He is a "victim" of the system and a casualty of it. It might therefore be said that punishing him constitutes punishing the victim. However, the reader need not be reminded of *his* victims, Sharon Tate, and the others. The issue is not punishment nor blaming of Manson, nor his "correction" nor "rehabilitation". Rather, it is that others in society are better served by his removal from their social scene.<sup>6</sup> Perhaps Manson is one of the prisoners whom Holland cites as being looked down on by the rest. But what is

<sup>6</sup>Judged by the deathly silence of downtown areas in many cities and by the security measures in dwellings, the others in society are removing *themselves* from the social scene and are incarcerating *themselves* behind locked doors. For another reason for social concern over violent crime, see text.

one to say regarding the assailants of the graduate student who was held up *for economic reasons* (money), and the teenager who was mugged? The assailant of the latter is in prison, is being "rehabilitated", and "will probably get time off for good behavior". The one beaten (I hesitate to use the term "victim") "too, wants to rehabilitate himself."<sup>7</sup> He is in a rehabilitation hospital, and the brain-damage produced by the beating may confine him to a wheelchair for the rest of his life. No parole for him. The graduate student is a quadruplegic. No release from confinement here. If violent crimes and white-collar crimes are class-related, and greater social concern about the former places an inequity in sentencing upon the poor, I submit that outcomes of the kind noted contribute to the social concern. And the fact that "we have all been victimized by small consumer frauds that leave us defenseless, because the cost of recovering the loss is larger than the loss itself" should not be surprising. It finds legal expression in *de minimus non curat lex*—the law is not concerned with trivialities. Ethics, in contrast, may be. An ethicist might regard cheating a child of a nickel as being as unethical as a million-dollar swindle, but the law will attend to the latter and ignore the former on *de minimus* grounds. If the consumer frauds are widespread so the sum of small recoveries by legal action exceeds response cost of recovery, victimization of the consumer may be halted—*de minimus* no longer applies.

3. We come to the third victim, behavior analysts themselves. Jim Holland's analysis, like others within its frame of reference, raises questions with regard to *all* professionals, not just behavior analysts. Consider the civil engineer who designs a highway from town to seashore. He may thereby make surf and sunshine available to urban dwellers, an outcome of service to them. However, the same highway may improve access to a plant that makes weapons of destruction. Even if it does not do so, maintaining the health

<sup>7</sup>Quoted from *Chicago Tribune*, "Victims of crime ask: 'What about our rights?'" February 1, 1977, Page 1, Section 1, at 2-6; Page 16, Section 1, at 1-6.

of urban dwellers and thereby of a steady source of skilled labor may also be an outcome of service to the social system. Or consider the orthopedic surgeon who sets a fractured leg. The medical outcome is of service both to patient and social system, and both may contribute payment. And the behavior analyst who develops an effective reading program may be of service to the child. But he is also regarded in some quarters as a fink who thereby makes children's minds more receptive to the brain-washing techniques of an exploitative society.

In essence, professionals are double agents.<sup>8</sup> One client is the patient or student (p-s). The other client is the social system. To the extent that professionals fulfill p-s obligations, they can and do take personal and professional pride in so doing. In such cases, the *occasion* for p-s *application* is a situation whose *reversal* (or transformation) is the professionally-produced outcome, e.g., illness to health, ignorance to knowledge. Professional *behavior* (treatment, training of p-s) is also reinforced by *reversal* of the presenting *occasion*. And system *behavior* (support of professional roles and opportunities, support of p-s roles and opportunities) is also reinforced by the same *reversal* (or a probability of such reversal) of the presenting *occasion*. In all three contingencies depicted (governing p-s, professional, and system behavior), the occasion-outcomes that govern the behaviors are congruent (see Goldiamond, 1976a, for more extensive analysis). The professional is thereby the agent of both p-s and social system. The law, as it does elsewhere, tries to be most explicit about double-agency. The defense lawyer is not only an agent of the defendant, he is also simultaneously *an officer of the court*. Where there is congruence in occasion-outcomes for all three behaviors (p-s,

professional, system), the fact that the professional is a double-agent should not be cause for concern, on its own. And, I submit, *a large proportion of behavioral studies belong in this category*.

It is where such congruence does not exist that related problems arise. For instance, the p-s agenda may be congruent with the social agenda, but the professional behaviors are inadequate to the task. Children may want to read, society may want them to, but the professional programs are not doing the job. Generally, behavior modifiers see themselves as *correcting this lack of congruence*. On the other hand, the p-s agenda may not be congruent with the social agenda. The regnant outcomes differ. In such cases, professionals should know where they stand. It is this issue to which, I believe, *much of Jim Holland's analysis is directed*. Depending on their orientation, professionals may or may not agree with the resolutions Jim Holland suggests. And there are consequences, and probabilities of consequences, both long and short term, involved. Jim Holland's analysis is useful in bringing this possibility to the attention of those practitioners who have not been attentive to it. It is unfortunate that it is presented in a context which at times deprecates behavioral contributions when the occasions-outcomes are congruent, or noncongruent in certain ways. It would seem that before one accuses a field of being part of the problem, one might collect evidence to indicate how prevalent and how serious this is (Goldiamond, 1975).

Regardless of whether we consider the three sets of occasions-outcomes to be congruent, their existence should enter into any analysis. Professionals are double-agents. The fact that they can blithely continue in their activities when the occasions-outcomes are congruent, and there seems to be no problem, should not blind them to the fact that there are always at least three different contingencies involved. Occasionally, contingencies may involve noncongruent occasions-outcomes. An analysis is then not only helpful, but necessary.

<sup>8</sup>Since the acceptance of this article for publication, an article with a similar title has appeared, namely, "The therapist as double agent" (Powledge, 1977). Its thrust is given by the caption below the title: "should patients be warned that anything they reveal in therapy may be disclosed to a third party?" Who was it who wrote of the "power of an 'idea which rationalizes contingencies whose time has come' "?

4. As somewhat of an anticlimax, I turn to the question of whether behaviorism is part of the solution. As just indicated, it can be quite helpful. But it should be noted that it is helpful when it makes contact with our repertoires. Certainly, we have professional-qua-professional repertoires. A problem arises when behaviorism does not make contact with our repertoires, or makes superficial contact.

Consider the experimental analysis of behavior. Its originating domain was the learning-conditioning laboratory of experimental psychology. And that field was then rife with learning theories, *i.e.*, systematizations. Some of the terms were derived from physiology (inhibition, latency), others from physics (oscillation), others elsewhere. Among Skinner's major contributions were the clear statements that the systematizations had outrun the data, and that the data should be subjected to fine-grain analysis; relevant categories might then be assayed and a different kind of theory might emerge (1950, 1969). Therefore, such theory must rest on immersion in the data of the area about which one theorizes. There are, of course, other contributions.

The success of this enterprise has now reached the point where the system developed is being extended to other areas. Where the analysts have not been immersed in a fine-grain analysis of the other area, the following question is raised: how different are the analysts' extensions of their theory to the new area different from the earlier extensions and theories of the learning theorists? Are the analysts, spurred by their successes, ignoring the lessons that helped them become successful?

Anyone familiar with my writings will know that I am not saying that behaviorism is meaningless in areas other than its origin. What I am questioning is its effectiveness and the effects upon it of its summary extension to areas whose fine-grain analysis is not in the repertoires of the extenders. I believe one of our tasks is to try to develop procedures for such fine-grained analysis. When we do so, we shall discover that there

are many sensible investigators in those areas who have something to say. They have been immersed in their fields for some time. They are often in contact with exceedingly fine-grained data. They will welcome our contributions—when we have something to contribute. But we can best contribute when we bring our own skills to the area. Like all behavior analytic formulations, being part of the solution is possible only under certain conditions.

Jim Holland cites the Twin Oaks community. As it so happens, I have been a steady subscriber to the *Leaves of Twin Oaks*, their quarterly publication.<sup>9</sup> It is a disarmingly honest document. One of the incidents that they report is the failure of a particular crop. They were applying their own system. A neighboring farmer then told them what they should be doing and what other farmers did who had been there for some time. They then decided that there was a lesson here: it made sense to take into account the experience of others who had been in the field for some time.

#### REFERENCE NOTE

<sup>1</sup>Powledge, F. The therapist as double agent. *Psychology Today*, July 1977, pp. 44-47.

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<sup>9</sup>*Leaves of Twin Oaks*, Twin Oaks Community, Merion Branch, Route 4, Box 17, Louisa, Virginia 23093. Subscription, \$3.00 a year.

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