

# Behaviourism—A Third Dimension

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IN THESE DAYS of berserk human behaviour on all levels of society, it may be pertinent to inquire into what makes people act as they do. Of course many have joined in the quest and it is a multi-dimensional project. Psychology has focussed on the subject and theories have abounded.

Freudianism, almost synonymous with psychology, has dominated the scene for many years. Probing into hidden springs of behaviour, with emphasis on sex, Freud has long fascinated professional and layman alike. A more recent development is Behaviourism whose current leading light is Prof. B. F. Skinner. This school (harking back to Pavlov's dog-bell-salivation) teaches that behaviour is conditioned and that people, through training, manipulation and control, can be made to behave in any way that is planned.

There are, to be sure, those who are dissatisfied with both these approaches. Among them is Dr. Abraham Maslow whose views are outlined by Frank Goble in *The Third Force*\*. Maslow rejects the Freudian approach because it concentrates on individual pathological behaviour. He rejects Behaviourism because it reduces man to mechanical — or at best animal — reactions.

Emphasis should be placed, says Maslow, on the normal individual and the study of what makes him so. And note must be taken that man is more than an animal or a machine; what is specifically human needs attention.

Thus Maslow re-introduces a conception of values and standards into the study of man *via* psychology. He speaks of morality, responsibility — and a concept he calls "self-actualization", which involves the progress of the individual from the satisfaction of his basic needs to the development of his higher potential, the reach for beauty and truth and goodness. Mr. Goble notes that a society which makes the satisfaction of basic wants too difficult stultifies this progression.

These ideas are backed up by research and application. Several other psychologists, either at about the same time as Maslow or influenced by him, became disaffected with Freudianism and tried new approaches. Among them is Dr. William Glasser who deals with "reality therapy" which introduces a measure of responsibility into behaviour rather than

treating deviants as "sick" people to be "treated". Results have been impressive. "Mentally ill" patients for whom orthodox psychology has been able to do nothing have responded remarkably to reality therapy.

Important to the concept of self-actualization is the concept of minimum effort ("man seeks to satisfy his desires with the least possible exertion"). This concept is explored in a book recommended by Frank Goble, *Human Behaviour and the Principle of Least Effort* by George K. Zipf. Using scientific methods and with much investigation, Dr. Zipf establishes "the principle of least effort as the primary principle that governs our entire individual and collective behaviour."

Frank Goble, who conducts the Thomas Jefferson Research Centre (Pasadena, California), finds "the third force" valuable in the development of management and leadership, and his Centre performs much work in this field.

A special study in the July 1 issue of *Time* magazine pointed to the problem of contemporary leadership — or the lack of it. Noting that there is today a dearth of outstanding leadership in virtually all fields throughout the world, *Time* asks why. Confusion, disillusionment, divisiveness, have all taken their toll. A sense of futility and distrust is pervasive. The mass of people feel they have little control over the gigantic forces pressing upon them. We have been through the various types of "leadership" that have arisen up to now to cope with these problems and they are found wanting.

Some of the insights of the Third Force are relevant here. In discussing industry, Goble cites studies that show that where workers are given participation in the decisions and rewards commensurate with the effort, productivity increases impressively. Where workers are simply given work to do under an authoritarian regime, work slows down and dissatisfaction increases. This could help explain some of the larger problems of society in that many feel it does not pay to be hard-working and virtuous and that power and decision-making are removed from the ordinary man.

There are many elements in the Third Force philosophy and in the concerns of the Thomas Jefferson Research Centre which harmonize with the philosophy

\* Pocket Books Ltd., New York, 4th printing 1973. 208 pp., paperbound, \$1.25.

of Henry George. To suggest an analogue between psychology and economics: the Freudian approach may be compared with the old "conservative" notion that everything depended on the individual. The Behaviourist school may be compared with collectivist philosophies that see the individual merely as a cog in a great social machine. The Third Force is like the Georgeist philosophy in that it restores individual responsibility and also recognizes that the individual needs a good social environment in order to flourish.

The principle of least effort is certainly Georgeist philosophy, also the concept of broad participation in social and economic as well as political affairs. The idea that man is more than a machine or an animal was preached by George, also man's ability to control his destiny rather than succumb to blind forces. It is interesting to note that these insights of George, counter to much prevailing philosophy, are receiving attention, systematic exploration and scientific support.