**Lecture Series: Chapter 14  It's All a Matter of Consequences:  Pages: 16**

**B. F. Skinner**


**Principal Features**

**Introduction**

Complete the following:

"… behaviorism is a school of psychology for which the basic subject matter is …" (331)

"Consistent with the view of other scientists, behaviorists believe that the science of psychology should deal only with …"

"They eschew entities buried away in the 'mind,' such as …"

Question: What does the following statement mean?

"Skinner developed … radical behaviorism."
Skinner, the Person

Question: What does the following statement mean?

"Skinner often played the iconoclast." (333)

Skinner's View of the Person

Environmentalism: The Importance of Consequences

Question: What do the following statements mean?

"Skinner rejects the repeated accusation that he is an 'S–R' … psychologist." (334)

"… Skinner stands 'guilty' of the charge of being an environmentalist."
"He often referred to parallels between the environment–behavior relationship and 'natural selection,' the process developed by Charles Darwin to explain how humans and other animals evolved to their present state."

"Likewise, humans, over thousands of generations, have become able to effectively perform certain behaviors."
Environmentalism: The Importance of Consequences (Continued)

Question: What was B. F. Skinner's position on genetic input? (334)

"Beyond Freedom and Dignity"

Question: What do the following statements mean?
"… we are all slaves to our environments." (335)

Question: What was B. F. Skinner's position on having freedom?

Question: What do the following statements mean?
"Skinner asked, 'Why shouldn't we decide the course of environmental control over our behaviors?'" (335-336)
"Beyond Freedom and Dignity" (Continued)

Question: What was B. F. Skinner's position on having "benevolent control"?

Question: What was B. F. Skinner's position on having dignity?

[Example] Dignity.

Basic Concepts: Skinner

Question: What do the following statements mean?

"Skinner claims not to have a theory."
Operant Conditioning

"Skinner's approach to psychology focuses on what many psychologists call 'instrumental' conditioning."

Question: What is operant conditioning insofar as B. F. Skinner was concerned?

Question: What do the following statements mean?

"If event B is contingent on event A, the occurrence of B depends on the prior occurrence of A."

Complete the following:

In operant conditioning, consequences are contingent on the prior performance of some response, often a very …

Positive Reinforcement and Extinction

Complete the following:

"Reinforcement occurs when some event is contingent on the …"
Complete the following:

"Positive Reinforcement is a process whereby some event, usually a stimulus, … (338)

"Skinner often placed a pigeon in a cage that bears the technical name free-operant chamber, but has become popularly known as the Skinner box."

[Illustration] Free-operant chamber. (338-339)

Complete the following:

"When the rate of responding becomes stable, conditioning is said to have been …"
"Operantly conditioning more complex responses requires special procedures."

**Question:** What is **shaping** insofar as B. F. Skinner was concerned? (339)

"Positive reinforcement occurs every day in the life of every person, including a typical college student."

**Negative Reinforcement and Punishment**

"Positive reinforcement … is not the only means by which behaviors are learned."

Complete the following:

"**Negative reinforcement** is a process whereby the likelihood of a response … (340)
Negative Reinforcement and Punishment (Continued)  

[Page Reference]  

[Illustration] Negative reinforcement.  

(340-341)

Question: What do the following statements mean?

"Escape conditioning can be used to terminate smoking or drinking behavior." (341)

Question: How does avoidance learning become possible?
Negative Reinforcement and Punishment  (Continued)

Complete the following:

"**Punishment** is a process whereby the likelihood of a response … (341)

**Question:** What do the following statements mean?

"Skinner long maintained that the aversive control technique 'punishment' is not an efficient way to control behavior."

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The Development of Humans: Language, Personality, and Child Rearing

**Development of Speech**

"A central part of child rearing and child development is the role the family plays in language learning."

**Question:** What was Skinner's position on the development of language in child rearing and development? (343)
Development of Speech (Continued)  

Question: What is the linguist Noam Chomsky's challenge to Skinner's position on language development?  

Building a Personality

Question: What does the following statement mean?

"Skinner wastes no opportunity to dismiss personality from the realm of science."

Question: What was Skinner's position on the relationship between artistic endeavor and reinforcement?

Question: How, according to Skinner, might a community encourage the pursuit of art in general, rather than just promoting a single artist?


**Development of Speech** (Continued)

**Question:** What was Skinner's *Walden Two* "credit system?"

**Evaluation**

"Studies in the Skinnerian tradition number in the thousands."

**The Interrelationship of Genetic Disposition and Reinforcement**

**Question:** What does the following statement mean?

"… people do not select experiences from their environment, the environment selects individuals' behavior, thus, it selects the experiences that accompany the behavior."

[Illustration] Possible link between genetic disposition and experiences.
"The phrase, behavior therapy, psychological therapy employing behavior behavioral techniques, first appeared in print in an article by Skinner and a colleague that described their use in the then-new methods."

**Question:** What are some of the applications of behavior therapy?  

"… the stranger's replies become secondary reinforcers."
Question: What does the following statement mean?

"… Skinner has been most severely criticized for discounting thought, feeling, and other phenomena that exist 'in the head' and, thus, cannot be directly observed."

"Emotions and thoughts can be important even when divorced from behavior."

[Illustrations] When thoughts are unrelated to behavior.
Question: What does the following statement mean?

"… Skinner's behaviorism cannot account for the process by which we take in information through our senses and give meaning to it."

(351)

Question: What does the following statement mean?

"… 'cognition' and 'affect' must become a part of behaviorists' account of human action."

Question: What is the current status, in terms of current evidence, of the Skinner-Chomsky debate?

(352)