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EXCERPT FROM "PRACTICE OF PSYCHIATRY"

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IV. The Behaviorist School of Psychology

"During the first quarter of the twentieth century there gradually grew up in the United States a new school of physiologic psychologists—the behaviorists. Chief among its exponents was Watson (born 1878), who did some of his earlier work in Johns Hopkins but later became a free lance in this field of investigative experimentation and philosophic propaganda. This new school made use of the comparative psychology of Morgan, the British psychologist, and the conditioned reflexes of Pavlov, the Russian physiologist. Watson first published his views of behaviorism in 1913.

"While behaviorism—as sponsored by Watson—appeared on the stage of action in 1912-13, that stage had long been awaiting its arrival. Cattell really announced 'behavior psychology' in his St. Louis address in 1904. In 1911 Pillsbury took a similar stand in his 'Essentials of Psychology.' In the same year, Thorndike came out strongly for behavior psychology. In 1905 Pavlov published his work on 'Conditioned Reflexes' and was followed (1907) by the Russian neurologist, Bekhterev, who published his book, 'Objective Psychology,' on motor reflexes. Behaviorism is almost an exclusive American school of thought and practice. It is wholly an objective method of investigation. From the very first, Watson appeared to have a positive animus against every concept of mind and consciousness.

"The behaviorists virtually throw heredity to the winds, although they may be willing to admit the inheritance tendencies which early appear in the phenomena of a few basic emotions, such as the sex urge in association with love, hate, fear, rage, and so on. Instincts and emotions, elements of consciousness, the will—in fact, the whole concept of personality as entertained by other psychologists—they disallow. The thesis which these people defend is that a human infant is just a 'bit of living, squirming protoplasm' whose parts are under the control of certain nerve branches extending from the brain and spinal cord, and that by means of the 'conditioned reflex' you can, by environmental control, by training and education, make of this child just about anything you wish provided you do not too far attempt to exceed the gross possibilities of human development.

"Behaviorism seems to be a new exhibition of the older association psychology in combination with the doctrines of the newer Russian school of 'conditioned-reflex psychology.'

"Behaviorism in its implied philosophy becomes, of course, highly materialistic and mechanistic. It is purely a stimulus-response psychology. Personality is supposed to be developed out of the unexplained and unproved association of these various simple reflexes as they are laid down in the stimulus-response experience. It is structuralism founded on nervous recognition and muscular response. The 'chained reflexes' come to explain the whole of human behavior.

"Some very interesting facts having to do with the conditioned reflex have been developed by Pavlov and the Russian school of physiologists, and we owe much to Watson and his associates for the painstaking manner in which they have elaborated upon the phenomena of conditioned reflexes in the human infant. Both Watson and his Russian confreres have done great service in the domain of physiology and physiologic psychology. It is when they presume to enter the realms of philosophy that we believe they commit grave blunders; it is then that they make declarations of faith with which we humbly beg to differ.

"Unquestionably there is a great deal of truth in this doctrine of the conditioned reflex, and no doubt the psychologists of the past have been remiss in their failure to give proper recognition to these well-established facts of physiology. For instance, Pavlov has not only shown that a dog can be conditioned to secrete digestive juice in response to one bell tone and not to another, even near in timbre, but also that dogs do not psychologically react to the sight of meat when they have been raised vegetarians. It is true that a dog can be caused to vomit in response to an injection of apomorphine, and then, because of association with a certain sound stimulus, presently he will vomit just as vigorously when he hears the conditioned sound stimulus even though no apomorphine has been administered.

"While the behaviorists disallow the concept of the subconscious mind, they recognize that certain memory material and life experiences are relatively more difficult to recall than others, and they explain this phenomenon on the hypothesis of what they call the 'unverbalized domain.' This teaching implies that verbalization, being a comparatively recent acquirement of the civilized races, is not uniformly operable in the human mind, that many experiences are filed away, as it were, in memory's archives without being properly named, and further that it is this failure to attach name symbols to these experiences that causes them to be less subject to recall, association, and desirable psychic control. They thus conceive that the 'neuroses' are the result of conflicts and uncertainties in this 'unverbalized' domain of memory patterns.

"Watson claims that all behavior is simply conditioned reflexes. By implication, behaviorism would build up a philosophy that would be all but devoid of ethics, morals, ideals, and all high spiritual values.

"The behaviorists refuse to recognize such psychological phenomena as conscience, desire, experience, likes and dislikes, even consciousness. To them there is no memory or habit—simply a muscular reaction to established reflexes. Human character is merely a matter of synaptic differential behavior. Behaviorism ignores psychology; it recognizes only—physiology.

"The behaviorist's personality consists in three parts—the behavioristic responses of:

1. The muscles of the trunk and limbs—more especially the muscles of 'manual skill.'
2. The muscles of the speech organs.
3. The unstriped muscles of viscera.

"They recognize only the verbal, manual, and visceral reaction systems, and personality consists in the interconnections between these three systems of reaction responses. The behaviorist refers all supposed subconscious and unconscious phenomena to the 'unverbalized domain.'

"Not recognizing pleasure or pain, good or bad, behaviorism is devoid of ethics. But even the admission of the existence of fear, rage, and love connotes some problem of social adjustment and consequent difficulty of personality adjustment. But the behaviorists deny the fact of individual differences--referring such things to 'differential situations.' Personality becomes, therefore, more a matter of situation than a manifestation of the organism. But it is the moral aspects of the behavioristic movement, rather than its scientific achievements, that serve to arouse so much interest. It is its boldness, freedom, 'and unlimited faith in the ability of science to take charge of human affairs' that so attracts the adventurous mind of youth.

"The behaviorists, as indicated by Watson's teachings, are inclined to recognize but three inherited emotions--fear, rage, and love. By love they are wont to designate something not far removed from Freud's libido; they refer to the tendency of a very young infant to yield pleasurable responses to certain stimuli. Fear is viewed as the driving motive designed to operate the mechanisms of escape from danger. Rage has more to do with preparing the organism for active combat. In general, it has been observed that slower heart action and quickened breathing accompany sensations of pleasure, while faster heart action and slower breathing are associated with feelings of displeasure.

"The acute emotions of fear seem to serve as an accelerator to all forms of nervous activity and most of the vital organs. On the other hand, the attitude of fear, the chronic state of fear or worry, appears to act as an inhibitor of most all forms of nervous and vital activity. Rage seems to supersede fear and to lead to certain types of action regardless of all consequences. Alcoholic intoxication of the right degree promotes rage by paralyzing one's inhibitory centers, thus effectively overcoming feelings of restraint. Strong biologic drives, such as the moving sex urge, in a measure seem to operate in an analogous manner.

"Enthusiasm is emotion under control. It is the expression of the temperamental drives as they are harnessed for service, as they are subject to employment in cooperation with the regulatory influence of the intellectual and moral natures, thereby being utilized more effectively in behalf of the personality--as a gear shift serves to produce a better and more selective control of automotive power. The inhibitory capacity of the personality is likewise comparable to the reverse gear.

"It is the presence of these emotional temperaments, these more or less explosive proclivities of the organism, that constitutes the unpredictable factor in human personality. In the absence of concentrated attention, without the action of a strong will, the average individual is very largely under the emotional control of these various drives and urges which, taken as a whole, go to make up the human temperament. All biologic drives, social undertakings, and moral enterprises are largely directed by underlying feelings which, in association with the intellectual and other personality factors, go to furnish the dynamic force of enthusiastic individuals, those persons who really do things.

"The weakness of behaviorism is not found in its utter rejection of genetics alone, but also in its failure to prove the possibility of the formation of a noble human personality by means of the interactions and reactions of things wholly anatomic and physiologic. Behaviorism likewise fails properly to recognize the role of the endocrines in the development of the human personality. But perhaps the most serious indictment which can be brought against this school of psychology, or rather physiology which seeks to supplant psychology, although it does not hesitate to indulge in definite philosophic pronouncements, is that its universal acceptance by modern civilized races would mean the sudden disappearance of all ideals and all striving for the realization of spiritual values."