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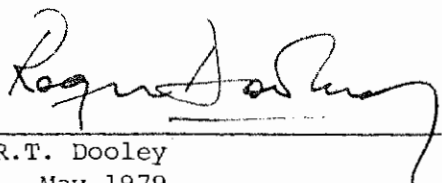
BEHAVIOUR THERAPY : CONCEPTUAL BASIS, PRACTICE AND EVALUATION

This essay is submitted as a partial requirement for the Degree of Master of Arts in Psychology at the Australian National University.

R.T. Dooley

May 1979

This essay is my own work and all sources used have been acknowledged.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "R. T. Dooley". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

R.T. Dooley
May 1979

PREFACE

This is an essay for a Masters Degree in Applied Psychology (by course work). For the duration of this course my objective has been to obtain skills for helping people with psychological problems. To do this competently, I felt the need for a conceptual framework from which to view abnormal behaviour and in which the skills to be applied were grounded.

It can readily be appreciated therefore that there is no joy for a person planning to begin practice as a clinical psychologist with an orientation to the use of behaviour therapy to read statements such as the following. Present day behaviour therapy "has no universally accepted definition, no consensus as to goals, concepts or underlying philosophy, no agreement as to its purview, no monolithic point of view, no overriding strategy or core technique, no single founding father, no general agreement about matters of training, and there is no single profession to which primary allegiance is declared". (Lazarus and Wilson, 1976).

Certainly behaviour therapy has changed and developed since its "modern" beginning with Wolpe's Reciprocal Inhibition in the mid 1950's, and the most obvious characteristic of this change has been a broadening of its scope, with a concomitant growth in techniques practised under a behaviour therapy heading. However, for my part, behaviour therapy does have a different conceptual tradition to the other psychotherapies and is distinguished from them by a distinctive approach (or methodology) for the practice of therapy.

This essay then attempts to establish what behaviour therapy is today by identifying its conceptual framework and against that background to set out an approach by which therapy with the individual client may be practised. My main purpose in adopting this approach was heuristic - I wanted to use the writing of the essay as a method of confirming my understanding of behaviour therapy and to provide a grounding for beginning practice.

By choosing such a broad objective the difficulty in writing was to determine to what level of detail the full field and each issue within it was to be treated. I have tried to solve this problem by focussing firstly on the two directions in which the "theory" has moved in recent years, i.e. the admission of cognitive processes to a functional role in the behavioural equation and development of the social learning perspective. In doing so it has been recommended that a new emphasis be given in behaviour therapy practice to the research in social psychology on the interactional influence of persons and situations in determining behaviour emitted and, in turn, being influenced by the behaviour produced. Secondly the practice of behaviour therapy has been examined as a methodology to establish the phases of an intervention programme and their purposes and to offer a comparison of the models and methods which may be adopted in each phase.

To conclude the essay the final chapter discusses the worth of behaviour therapy as a clinically effective and efficient approach to psychotherapy.

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