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Verbal Behavior

B. F. Skinner

VERBAL BEHAVIOR

Introduction by Henry D. Schlinger Jr., PhD
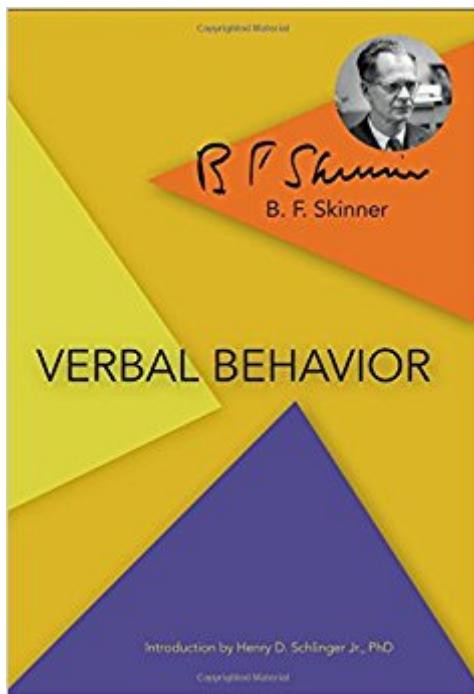
Synopsis

Over half a century after its initial publication in 1957, Verbal Behavior has remained in high demand and continues to contribute to science and society. The documented efficacy of Skinner's practices has maintained the popularity of Verbal Behavior despite the initial criticism from Noam Chomsky's allegedly fatal review. In fact, his research has inspired techniques that have proven increasingly successful with aberrant behavior disorders, such as autism and delayed speech. In this brilliant and ambitious work, Skinner gives a functional analysis of verbal behavior and argues that operant conditioning can account for and explain a large portion of linguistic phenomena, as demonstrated in laboratory experiments and extensive literary analysis. Skinner details the consequences and issues of this analysis and addresses its philosophical implications, such as the social aspects of language and natures of meaning and thought. Skinner's classic study of psychology, while controversial, has contributed to the welfare of society, and it continues to inspire a growing body of research and applications. Verbal Behavior is an exceptional theoretical work for those who wish to understand the principals of behavioral therapy. B. F. Skinner (1904-1990), America's most influential behavioral scientist, authored over 20 books and nearly 200 articles. He served as the Psychology Department Chair at the University of Indiana and later became the Edgar Pierce Professor of Psychology at Harvard University until his retirement in 1974. His contributions to psychology have incited an abundance of developments and remain relevant in the field today.

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Customer Reviews

I return to this book off and on. (I wish I can study this book with someone who has mastered this material.) The only epiphany I have had in my life is/was when I read Chapter 2 of this book about two decades ago (and understood that Skinner was analyzing language utterances as law of effect conditioned behavior).Simply a brilliant book. Most underrated,as people have pointed out.I just reread Chapter 1. It only has 12 pages. However, the brilliance can clearly be seen. As is the difficulty. There are about 12 sentences (in these 12 pages) that I do not understand almost completely. (For instance, the one about speaker also being a listener.)Added on 6/12/2004------------------I happened to come across Chomsky's critique of Verbal Behavior online and started studying it closely, especially Section 3. I noticed several misunderstandings almost right away and started answering them, in a writeup. (I will post the details on these later.) On a lark, I sent a copy of this to Noam Chomsky, not expecting to receive a reply. I was surprised to get a reply. We exchanged several e-mails. However, Chomsky stubbornly refused to see my points. His answers were mostly non-sequiturs. Are may points valid? You be the judge when I get around to posting my two specific points. In the meantime, you may want to look at[...]Added on 12/25/2011------------------I am rereading this book and the following thought occurred to me: In this book, Skinner proposes a whole new scheme for understanding language behavior, which effectively pushes aside centuries of traditional views. (If he is right, this is a major step forward. And I have no doubt that he is right.) Has this ever been done before?

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