

Metacontingencies in Walden Two

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Abstract

A distinction is made between contingencies of reinforcement (contingent relations between a class of responses and a common consequence) and metacontingencies (contingent relations between a class of operants and a long-term cultural outcome). The fictional utopia portrayed in Walden Two is examined in terms of the kinds of metacontingencies characteristic of that culture. It is suggested that if a culture is to approximate utopia, attention must be paid to the metacontingencies and to their supporting contingencies of reinforcement.

I first read B.F. Skinner's *Walden Two* around 1972, and I was ready to pack my bags: surely somebody had managed to make it happen. Since that time I have heard of real communities patterned after Skinner's fictional utopia — most notably Twin Oaks and Los Horcones. But I want utopia as it is portrayed in the book — sprung full blown from the pen of Skinner. Perhaps, like Estragon and Vladimir in Samuel Becket's play, I am waiting for Godot, who will deliver the Promised Land to me. I at least await a Frazier, the fictional designer of Walden Two, who will know what to do and how to do it.

A more likely solution to achieving a better world may lie in arranging better contingencies in our current environments to move us toward that goal. We may as well begin now and where we are. Going somewhere else, like awaiting a wise designer, is not likely to make beginning any easier. Our task appears to entail clearing a path through the wilderness that stands between us and the Promised Land and designing and building the vehicles we need to take us there. In short, we must create the technology, which involves more than "applying a few general principles" (Skinner, 1969, p. 97).

Toward that end, I have spent some time in trying to understand the critical differences between Walden Two and our own culture. I have tried to clarify some of Skinner's discriminations for myself and, where useful, to draw on the insights of other radical thinkers both inside and outside the field of behavior analysis. I am here to report on my progress — at least, I think it is progress — as I proceed through the wilderness.

Contingencies and Metacontingencies

Several years ago, in trying to describe some elements of our own approximation of Walden Two at the Center for Behav-

ioral Studies, I labored to distinguish between two kinds of contingencies that seemed to be operating there: 1) contingent relations between a class of responses with a common consequence — contingencies of reinforcement — and 2) contingent relations between a class of operant classes and a common cultural consequence. I called these second kind of contingent relations metacontingencies. I later realized I was translating into daily events, or perhaps clarifying for myself, Skinner's distinction between the selection of operant behavior in individuals and the selection of cultural practices in societies. The critical difference, it seems to me, between our world and Walden Two is in the metacontingencies. Let me first clarify the difference between contingencies and metacontingencies before proceeding.

An operant is a group of responses, of varying topographies, that have been bundled into a functional class as a result of their having produced a common consequence. The contingency of reinforcement is the unit of analysis that describes the functional relations between operant behavior and the environment with which the behaving organism interacts. Contingencies of reinforcement involve a selection process at the behavioral level which parallels, and owes its existence to, the phylogenetic process called natural selection. Although many — in the human case, most — of the relations that emerge between operant behavior and the environment do so as a result of the individual's history, the process is directly mediated by the organism's biology.

An oft given example of an operant class is that group of responses which have historically led to a door opening: its members would include knocking, calling out, turning the handle and pushing, inserting and turning a key, etc. The reinforcing consequence is immediate, and as Michael (1984) has recently pointed out, we need to look for other explanations for the strengthening of most behavior that is widely separated in time from its consequences.

The metacontingency is the unit of analysis describing the functional relations between a class of operants, each operant having its own immediate, unique consequence, and a long term consequence common to all the operants in the metacontingency. Metacontingencies must be mediated by socially arranged contingencies of reinforcement. Take, for example, the various behaviors involved in producing the long term consequence of reduced air pollution. Engineers must engage in the various operants involved in designing catalytic converters; assembly line workers must learn to build them and integrate them into the working parts of the car; consumers must buy those cars

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and pump unleaded gasoline; refinery personnel must develop and use the process of taking the lead out of gasoline. The likelihood of all these operants occurring without socially mediated contingencies appears to be small. The mediating contingencies are designed and implemented because of the relation of such mediation to long term outcomes such as reduced pollution.

In at least two ways, verbal behavior provides a critical link between contingencies and metacontingencies. First, verbal behavior in the form of rules bridges the gap between behavior and long term consequences. That is, verbal behavior enables a single act, the statement of a rule, to occur in response to events widely dispersed in time. The rule may then enter, as a discriminative stimulus, into the contingencies of reinforcement that generate and maintain behavior unlikely to occur in its absence. For example, the rule "Hugging my child when she approaches me with a smile results in more smiles" is verbal behavior under stimulus control of temporally unrelated events. Once the rule has been formulated, it can be used to bring others' behavior under stimulus control of that relationship. The second way verbal behavior enters into metacontingencies is when social reinforcement provides the consequence maintaining behavior under control of the rule until the long term consequences can be discerned. As those who try to teach clients or students to reinforce the desirable behavior of others know, the predicted change in the behavior of the others is too slow in occurring, too distributed across time, and too separated from the change agent's behavior to function as reinforcement without social mediation (e.g., graphs, praise, etc.).

Many of the contingencies of reinforcement in Walden Two are similar to those in our own lives. When we flip the switch, the light comes on; when we say "good morning", people respond with a greeting. The metacontingencies are, however, profoundly different. Thus the verbal behavior linking the two necessarily differs. And since what we say about the world creates our concepts of reality, the metacontingencies seem to be the tail that wags the dog.

Since Walden Two is presented by Skinner as a utopia, one might ask if the metacontingencies in that culture are more likely to promote survival than those in our own culture. Like all fiction, *Walden Two* presents the picture and leaves the reader to abstract the rules. But Skinner does give us a hint, which has led me to the following analysis of the metacontingencies in Walden Two and their relation to its utopian character.

Technological and Ceremonial Cultural Processes

Within the first few pages of *Walden Two*, Skinner refers to Thorstein Veblen's *Theory of the Leisure Class*. In that book Veblen distinguished between two opposing cultural processes he saw at work in our own society as well as others — the technological and the ceremonial. Although Veblen may have viewed these forces as immutable, like Yin and Yang, good and evil, or the life force and the death force, Walden Two seems to be Skinner's hypothesis that they are not immutable, but emerge from human behavior — much of which is a function of contingencies of reinforcement, and thereby mutable. The difference between Walden Two and our own culture appears to be that Walden Two has dispensed with ceremonial cultural processes and all its

metacontingencies support technological processes. I have earlier (Glenn, 1985) analyzed the behavioral contingencies underlying these processes. A summary of that analysis will lead to the metacontingencies in Walden Two.

Technological contingencies involve behavior maintained by non-arbitrary changes in the environment. The reinforcers entering into technological contingencies derive their power from their usefulness, value, or importance to the behaving person as well as others. Ceremonial contingencies, on the other hand, involve behavior that is maintained by social reinforcers deriving their power from the status, position, or authority of the reinforcing agent independent of any relation to changes in the environment directly or indirectly benefitting the behaving person.

Ceremonial control is exemplified by "Do it because I say so." Technological control is exemplified, first, by behavior entering into natural contingencies of reinforcement (levers are used because they allow building to proceed more quickly) and, second, by contrived social contingencies that mediate the relations between behavior and ensuing outcomes in technological metacontingencies. ("Do it because it will result in improved sanitation, which will result in improved health").

The metacontingencies involved in technological behavior bundle together large numbers of operant classes, in many individuals, all of which have a common long term consequence that benefits all those individuals as well as others. Technological metacontingencies require the abstraction of good rules, that is, rules accurately describing the functional relations between behavior and non-arbitrary immediate or long term consequences. These metacontingencies also involve the mediating verbal behavior of rule stating, the consequence for rule following, and the continuous monitoring of results of following the rule. Technological metacontingencies require constant asking: Are the consequences still those predicted? Is the rule still good?

Conflicting Metacontingencies

According to Veblen's disciple, Clarence Ayres (1944/1962), technological processes move cultures forward — in our own terminology, by increasing the range and effectiveness of operant behavior in changing the environment to enhance individual and group survival and satisfaction. Ceremonial contingencies impede the evolution of operant behavior, especially those operants defining "cultural practices." The ceremonial process forces cultural practices into rigidly defined grooves, maintaining them through social control derived from status, position or authority. To the extent that the practices adventitiously result in long term consequences beneficial to the members of the culture, the ceremonial control may not be terribly detrimental. But ceremonial control is not sensitive to the possibilities for constructive change. Ceremonial metacontingencies impede and preclude change of any kind, even when current contingencies produce serious problems.

Ayres suggests that rapid cultural evolution occurs in cultures when the ceremonial processes break down and technological processes rush on unchecked, producing massive changes during short time spans. Such changes provide, of course, the opportunity for new ceremonial control to emerge, a

new power group to control through authority or status gained by their role in advancing technology. The very group whose technological behavior produced the revolutionary changes now have acquired status; they are inclined to put the brakes on cultural evolution and maintain control by authority. Ceremonial control maintains itself; technological control ensures change.

As Skinner pointed out in *Science and Human Behavior* (1953), technological development has proceeded rapidly in domains where scientific method has been brought to bear on a subject matter. The discrepancy between technological progress in the physical and biological sciences and that in the behavioral and social sciences has led to a dangerous imbalance in our power to deal effectively with the physical environment and with the behavior of individuals and groups in the culture. Since we are not likely to turn our backs on technologies that have bettered the human lot so significantly, Skinner suggested that we move forward to develop the behavioral technologies needed to redress the imbalance.

In *Beyond Freedom and Dignity* (1971), Skinner suggests that our continuing failure to correct the dangerous imbalance of technological progress in the two arenas results from our tenacious clinging to a vision of reality produced by earlier technological progress. That vision is being maintained by ceremonial control and continues to impede the development of behavioral technologies needed for survival of our culture.

A recent example of ceremonial impediment of technological progress in cultural practices can be found in the general refusal to implement or support further development of the powerful educational technology called Direct Instruction. How are we to account for the profound indifference of our educational system and its financial supporters to a technology that has demonstrated it can produce competency in basic academic skills in populations previously doomed to failure? The irrational decision to further fund competing projects that failed to produce such results and to neglect funding the one that succeeded (Carnine, 1984) suggests that effectiveness, or outcome, was not the criterion on which decisions were based. Considering the critical need in our culture for a population able to participate in the complex social and technical activities currently required, not too many such decisions should be needed to ensure our own cultural extinction. Walden Two, on the other hand, is presented by Skinner (1985) as having done a complete about-face in its educational practices between 1948 and 1984.

Technological and Ceremonial Processes in Walden Two

Drastic changes in the educational practices of Walden Two were entirely predictable given the metacontingencies under which the community is portrayed as operating. The metacontingencies were designed specifically to allow such change. Walden Two is an experimental community. This means not merely that the community is an experiment but that the community experiments. In Walden Two the value of any behavior is explicitly judged in terms of the practical consequences of the behavior for its members. Do those consequences directly benefit the community and all its members?

Walden Two has been designed so that such beneficial

consequences take precedence in the development of its cultural practices. What design features has Frazier incorporated to ensure such an outcome? I believe there are at least two such critical features, and they are related to one another. The first is the abolishing of institutions maintained by ceremonial control; the second is a clear relation between the contingencies and the metacontingencies in Walden Two.

Absence of ceremonial control

Let's examine, first, the evidence for the abolition of ceremonial control in Walden Two and its effects on cultural practices. Three institutions that have wielded ceremonial control in virtually all cultures have been the family, the church, and the state. Since ceremonial control derives its power from authority or status independent of pragmatic (outcome) considerations, ceremonial processes often rely heavily on aversive control. Of the three institutions, the family is most likely to combine a mixture of aversive, ceremonial contingencies and technological, directly reinforcing contingencies. The family has traditionally served two functions — that of providing economic and interpersonal security to its members and that of training its members to accept the arbitrary, ceremonial power of authority.

In Walden Two, the family as a functional unit does not exist. Its desirable feature, providing economic and interpersonal security, has been assumed by the community as a whole; its ceremonial power has vanished because the family group does not have control of any reinforcers that cannot be obtained by individual members independently. All reinforcers in Walden Two are available to all members at all times, contingent only on the behavior required to produce them. The fundamental criterion for the abolition of ceremonial control is economic equality. In the absence of ceremonial control, each member of the community is free to develop what might be called "honest interpersonal relations." Interpersonal reinforcers are contingent entirely on interpersonal behavior.

In Walden Two individuals are both more independent and more interdependent than in our own culture. Neither resources (i.e., conditions making behavior possible) nor reinforcers (i.e., behavioral consequences) are contingent on ceremonial obedience. However, in order to maintain their relative social autonomy, members must behave in ways that benefit the group. This is not so onerous when any benefit to the group will automatically benefit the individual. If social reinforcers mediate technological behavior, their worth is equal to the technological outcome. Other than the use of contrived social reinforcers to mediate technological contingencies and metacontingencies, interpersonal reinforcers enter only into interpersonal contingencies.

The importance of such relations has long been recognized. To paraphrase Pascal's (1961) description of tyranny, it is when beauty demands belief, strength demands love and learning demands fear. "We owe different duties to different qualities: Love is the proper response to charm, fear to strength, and belief to learning." Marx (1963) put it a bit more bluntly: "Then love can only be exchanged for love, trust for trust . . . if you wish to influence people, you must be a person who has a stimulating and encouraging effect upon others . . . If you love with-

out evoking love in return, if you are not able to make yourself a beloved person, then your love is impotent."¹ Skinner says it in the most action-useful terms of all: "In a world of complete economic equality, you get and keep the affections you deserve. You can't buy love with gifts or favors, you can't hold love by raising an inadequate child, and you can't be secure in love by serving as a good scrubwoman or a good provider" (1948, p. 147). So much for the mixing of ceremonial control with the reinforcers that establish and maintain interpersonal devotion.

Turning now to religious authority, it is unnecessary in *Walden Two* because the relation between contingencies and metacontingencies is clearly specified. The role of religious authority has traditionally been to maintain contingencies that promote survival of the group. It has done so by establishing rules which are usually abstracted from current contingencies (i.e., good rules) and then maintaining them through ceremonial control, even if they become misspecified as a result of changing contingencies. The prototype case is given in *Exodus*. Moses leads his people out of Egypt, where they have lived in relatively sumptuous circumstances but under ceremonial control of their Egyptian masters. The fruits of their own technological behavior belong to the Egyptians and benefit Moses' people only if they meet the ceremonial requirements. Nevertheless, Moses has to get his people far enough away from the reinforcers of Egypt, and into a relatively chaotic environment, before he can take the chance of offering them the choice of proceeding to the Promised Land. At this point the people enter into a covenant that binds them together in search of a common goal.

What is interesting about the covenant is that it is not with one another, but with God. In order for the people to survive as a culture, some guidelines were needed to protect the integrity of the group. Moses, accordingly, descended from the mountain with the Ten Commandments, which appear to have derived from a remarkably astute analysis of the behavior needed to maintain the integrity of the group, given the nature of their current social and technological environment. Moses was probably not in a position to explain the rational underpinnings of the Ten Commandments, their technological value in holding the group together. So they acquired instant ceremonial control when presented as God's trade-off for leading his people to the Promised Land. The first commandment established God's final authority and sealed the ceremonial control Moses would have as God's agent.

Predictably enough, once Moses had done his part in delivering the people in sight of the Promised Land, he died, perhaps because such centralized control was dangerous once the goal was accomplished. In his book *Exodus and Revolution* Michael Walzer suggests that *Exodus* is the prototype of social revolutions in western civilization, and that although the Promised Land never quite lives up to the press releases, the story has served us well to guide social progress. Perhaps we will be able to get closer to the Promised Land by dispensing with the ceremonial control of religious authority and looking more carefully at the contingencies underlying the rules that hold in place our social practices. In any case, that is how Frazier has designed *Walden Two*.

That community's version of the Ten Commandments is the *Walden Code*. Although Skinner was not very specific as to the contents of the Code, one might surmise its contents from the

design and operation of the community. My hypotheses as to the Code's contents will not be indulged in this paper; the important point to be made is that the Code is a set of guidelines specifying the operant classes necessary for survival of the culture. In order for the Code to have an effect without ceremonial control, the behavior specified by the Code must produce consequences that are currently reinforcing to the community as well as enhance its long term survival. Thus the Code would likely be a set of "Thou shalt" rather than "Thou shalt not." If the behavior specified in the Code is to be maintained by social reinforcers that derive their strength from the long term effects of the behavior on the community, the value of the items in the Code must be assessed in terms of their usefulness. Presumably the Code will gradually change as the *Walden* culture evolves. Thus the metacontingencies maintaining behavior in accordance with the Code are based on technological processes. The ceremonial authority of religion is replaced with pragmatics. Since what we call the spiritual aspects of religion can be conceptualized as behavioral phenomena (Shimoff, 1984) and do not require ceremonial control, they offer no problem in *Walden Two*.

The state, too, has been dispensed with in *Walden Two*. This is possible because all members of the community are directly responsible to one another, the community being small enough to give each member direct contact with all the others. Economic equality is also necessary, as Marx saw over a century ago. *Walden Two* is able to do without the state only because its metacontingencies require that outcomes benefit all members. A primary function of the state is to enforce ceremonial metacontingencies and regulate the competition for resources. People have always feared the ceremonial power of the state. The totalitarian state offers no adequate countercontrol for the ruled and thus invariably results in extremes of aversive, ceremonial control by the rulers. The democratic state without economic equality is too easily used to maintain ceremonial control of resources by those already controlling them. And even with economic equality, the democratic state depends on public opinion, which may be misinformed — verbal behavior under control of variables irrelevant or even prejudicial to cultural survival. How *Walden Two* can do without the state will be discussed in the next section.

The absence of ceremonially maintained institutional control in *Walden Two* is probably the feature that frightens many readers, who persist in reading into *Walden Two* the spectre of such control. Since most readers will have experienced ceremonial control by family, church, and state, they seem to have difficulty imagining a community where ceremonial control is absent. They must assume it is so diabolically hidden that it is not even visible — rather like the Oedipus Complex, of which it is said that Anna Freud could find no evidence, thereby concluding that it must have great strength to be so well repressed.

Contingencies and metacontingencies in *Walden Two*

The operant behavior of the members of any culture may be classified in terms of the kinds of consequences that the behavior has for the behaving individual and for the culture. We have historically, if somewhat intuitively, distinguished be-

¹The quotations from Pascal and Marx were brought to my attention by William A. Luker, Professor of Economics.

tween work, play and interpersonal behavior. Work may be specified as behavior that is essential to the survival of the culture, thereby entering into technological metacontingencies. We distinguish between “real work” and “make work” by the discrepancy in the technological effects of each. “Make work” leads to nothing and is ceremonially maintained. Play is behavior producing non-arbitrary reinforcers having no direct bearing on the survival of the culture. However, the opportunity to engage in behavior producing those reinforcers is an important feature of a culture with survival value. Interpersonal behavior, in the strict sense, is that behavior toward other people which is maintained by the responses of the other people.

In Walden Two the metacontingencies are designed so that the reinforcers for these behaviors are not mixed and matched. Interpersonal reinforcers do not buy anything but interpersonal behavior from other people. The interpersonal relations in a community without ceremonial control would appear likely to be just as Skinner portrayed them — simple, straightforward and completely honest. There is no reason for them to be otherwise. Work behavior does not directly produce interpersonal reinforcers nor differential opportunities to engage in play with its accompanying reinforcers. Work involving cooperative or interactive behavior may be intrinsically interesting to some people but that work like all other is maintained by its technological consequences. Play behavior does not accrue any reinforcers other than those deriving from the consequences of the play itself, including opportunities to interact with other people. How was Walden Two designed to ensure that tyranny, as described by Pascal, would not intrude?

First, let’s look at work in Walden Two. Only the activities essential for survival of the community are designated as “work” and thereby managed by the Labor Credit system. There are three kinds of work in Walden Two — manual labor, organization and management, and policy making and assessing. Manual labor and managing are both kinds of work that produce consequences clearly related to operant behavior. Policy making is furthest removed from its consequences, perhaps one reason why policy makers cannot get all their labor credits from that work activity. Planners must earn one work credit per day doing manual labor. A more important reason for planners to engage in some labor may be that it brings them into contact with the same contingencies experienced by the rest of the members. In addition, it keeps the planners from being members of a different “class”, likely to instigate ceremonial control.

The work of organizing and managing, which also carries ceremonial privileges in our own culture, has no concomitant privileges in Walden Two. Because such behavior in our own culture often ensures a better economic position as well as ceremonial control, a huge segment of the population aspires to such “position”. Often such positions are held by people who have obtained them via ceremonial routes and do not have the behavioral repertoires or interests to fulfill the work responsibilities adequately. In Walden Two, there is absolutely no advantage, and even some disadvantage (i.e., longer work hours) for people engaging in such work. The contingencies almost guarantee that the people willing to take on such jobs will do so because the work is enjoyable to them and because the outcomes of their activities benefit the group, including themselves.

Manual labor in Walden Two is distributed among the

members of the community so that no one needs to work more than four hours a day, and those doing less desirable work labor only 2 and 1/2 hours a day. Care is taken that the labor is not separated from its natural consequences, people have plenty of opportunity to change jobs when they wish, and all work obtains equal respect — backed up by equal access to all resources for all members and no personal credit for jobs well done.

By arranging the contingencies of the work environment as described above, Frazier has set up the following metacontingencies. First, it is to the advantage of everyone in Walden Two to conserve resources, because the standard of living, exemplified by the short amount of time spent in work, is directly related to reducing the amount of work necessary to guarantee survival in a comfortable, if not luxurious, environment. This is exactly opposite the metacontingencies in our own culture where individuals compete for available resources, requiring increasing use of resources to compete effectively through production, reducing thereby the amount of resources available (or increasing the cost of using them) for effective competition. Second, only activities necessary for survival and physical well being of the group are given labor credits and all such activities enter into the labor credit system. The credit value of a given activity is adjusted based on its preference value to the members — the more preferred work gets less credit. This is eminently rational because work that is valued over other work has reinforcing value over and above that common to all work. In Walden Two the common value is, explicitly, the survival and welfare of the group. Work which is the least reinforcing has only the value of its contribution to the community — but it also gives the worker maximum amount of time to engage in other, more intrinsically reinforcing activities.

We come now to the activities treated as play in Walden Two. As it happens, we also think of these as fun: art in all its forms, games and recreation, and science, at least in the sense of basic research. Although these activities are different in important ways, they are alike in two critical features: they are activities that people engage in for whatever the activities themselves have to offer and they are not essential for day to day survival. Periods of history known for these activities are designated call Golden Ages. Presumably they are called golden because they fostered activities that produced so many artifacts that are reinforcing to those of later periods — literature, history, art, music, and conceptual systems that order and make sense of the universe. Such outcomes require that many people have the leisure to engage in such peculiarly human pursuits.

Throughout human history, extremely few people have had the leisure to pursue these activities. Many of those who followed such pursuits bought the opportunity to do so by suffering cruel deprivations. In our own time, some few individuals are able to buy the opportunity to engage in such behavior by selling its products to the highest bidder. The metacontingencies in Walden Two make the opportunity to engage in such behavior available to all its members, and the products are available to all the members. Frazier (who, as the protagonist, often speaks Skinner’s thoughts) predicts an unparalleled Golden Age in Walden Two. Its people will not be exhausted from labor; they are free to develop their own interests; both time and material resources are available; all members will live from birth among people interested in and pursuing such activities; and the

absence of competitive contingencies should incline the members toward encouraging and supporting the efforts of all. The metacontingencies are designed to give ample opportunity and support to every member of Walden Two to explore art, literature, music, etc. The behavior that actually evolves will be shaped and maintained by the intrinsic consequences.

Perhaps the most radical effect of the absence of ceremonial control in Walden Two is likely to be seen in the interpersonal sphere. The use of interpersonal reinforcers to commandeer ceremonial control has probably led to many of the problems plaguing humankind throughout history. The concentration of ceremonial control among a minority in a culture may have required the less powerful to intrude interpersonal control into contingencies having no direct relation to interpersonal behavior. This pattern appears to have been reliably played out in the relations between males and females in western cultures. Males have retained ceremonial control over almost all natural and cultural resources, even those produced by the technological behavior of women. Women have, perhaps consequently or perhaps antecedently, gained access to the technological reinforcers by way of making personal reinforcers contingent on access. Males with less ceremonial control have also used interpersonal control to gain access to reinforcers unavailable through more relevant behavior.

The imbalance appears to have resulted in a profound distrust among individuals, especially between those with ceremonial power but lacking interpersonal reinforcers and those with interpersonal power but lacking access to ceremonial reinforcers (status, position, etc.). Cultural metacontingencies supporting ceremonial control insure a permanent cold war between the parties. Perhaps worse, even the possibility of such a non-reciprocal reinforcement trade-off may have precluded genuine affection where it was possible and genuine technological behavior where it could have made a difference. Samson and Delilah are the prototypes. As long as some stand to lose their power by being seduced by interpersonal reinforcers and others have only interpersonal reinforcers to gain access to ceremonially controlled resources, people with ceremonial control will never be confident they are loved "for themselves," as we say; and those ceremonially refused access to technological resources will never know if they really had "anything to offer" — but themselves (or, more accurately, their interpersonal behavior).

For those convinced it is important to get reinforcers "for the right reasons," our own culture is an exceedingly painful environment. The dual opportunities for genuine affection and honest work in Walden Two are necessarily related. To the extent metacontingencies in any culture are ceremonial, affection and honest work will generally be at risk.

Government in Walden Two

Perhaps the most difficult feature of Walden Two for us to understand is its government. The difficulty probably lies in the fact that government has almost always involved ceremonial control. The government in Walden Two does not. The people doing the work called "governing" in Walden Two are working for the exact long term consequences as everyone else. Everyone's work enters into the same metacontingencies. Further-

more, the activities entering into "governing" are as sharply reduced as the consequences maintaining those activities.

Government historically has had several functions, including: establishing policies and making laws, enforcing obedience to the laws, protecting the community from outside groups or renegade members within the community, collecting taxes and spending the money. Government in Walden Two has none of these functions but the first — to establish policies and rules. The other functions of government have been distributed among other workers in Walden Two, many of them equally distributed across the community as a whole. There appears to be very little need for laws in Walden Two because there is very little need to regulate relations among individuals or groups. Walden Two functions like an organism, each component in conjunction with the others, all for one and one for all. Altruistic motivation is not required because the metacontingencies ensure that what is good for one is good for all.

The role of government has generally been to guarantee the concentration of ceremonial control by a small number of people including those in the government. To counter the imbalance, the trend has generally been to distribute that control among larger numbers of people. Nowhere is the result of this trend more clearly seen than in the behavior of the minor bureaucrats. Never mind whether the circumstances of a given situation match the contingencies underlying a rule. The rule will control your behavior because the bureaucrat is going to see that it does — often for the sheer pleasure of calling the shots. Here there is no outcome of one's work other than the manipulation and control of other people's behavior — for its own sake.

The focus in this process has always been on people and their positions with regard to one another. In trying to redress imbalances, humans at first viewed the problem as one of dispensing with a bad leader and replacing him with a good one. Finding such a "good one" was not so easy, though. First, adventitious contingencies would have had to have produced, somewhere, an individual who had the behavioral repertoire that would characterize him as a "good leader." Second, that individual had to be ceremonially accessible — that is, been born of the right parents, etc. Third, the individual had to be recognized as having the right stuff; and fourth, in order to install the individual as leader, the competition would have had to be placated or destroyed.

The trend over the past several hundred years, to distribute ceremonial power across many people, even across different branches of government, has been fairly effective in establishing some workable countercontrol among individuals and groups. But the process rests on a fundamental discrimination which may ultimately prove inadequate to solving the problem. The discrimination is that between good rulers and bad, good people and bad. The changes based on that discrimination have involved seeking ways of insuring that the bad people cannot get or keep ceremonial control.

If the focus were to be on desirable and undesirable behavior we would be led to desirable and undesirable *contingencies*. What western cultures have been busy trying to distribute is ceremonial control. The more people who have a little, the better the balance of power, and the more stable the culture. There are two problems with this. The first is political. In order for ceremonial control to be worth anything, it must commandeer dispropo-

portionate direct access to reinforcers and opportunities to behave to produce technological reinforcers. Thus there must be somebody with disproportionate lack of access. The redistribution of ceremonial power has been forced on the minority holding that power by a majority who had strength in numbers. But as the distribution reaches the halfway point, it will be the minority who is without, leaving them with no political power in numbers to counterbalance the ceremonial control of resources. Access to powerful weapons, however, cannot be indefinitely precluded. Thus, the hope one might have that ceremonial power would become so equally distributed that it would cancel itself out is probably unfounded.

The second problem is more immediately practical. By focusing on distributing ceremonial power, we have neglected the source of all real power for positive change: operant behavior producing non-arbitrary consequences. So in our proclivity for focusing on good people versus bad people we have neglected the possibilities inherent in discriminating useful behavior versus non-useful. In *Walden Two*, the metacontingencies support behavior useful to the community and every member in it. The role of the government there is simply to insure those metacontingencies are maintained. Those governing must do so without benefit of ceremonial power.

The people who make up the government of *Walden Two* are called the Planners. There only a few of them and their work is maintained solely by technological contingencies, just like everyone else's work. No ceremonially derived reinforcers are available to the Planners. Their work is not considered privileged, deserving of special recognition, or valued more highly than anyone else's. They get exactly the same thing from their work that everybody else gets — pleasure in doing the work itself and the outcome of the work for the community, including themselves.

The governing of *Walden Two*, like every other activity there, is looked upon as operant behavior. It is judged by its consequences — both immediate and long term. The complete focus of the community on the consequences of behavior for the community is what makes it possible to dispense with ceremonial control. The absence of ceremonial control is what makes the egalitarian metacontingencies possible. As long as *Walden Two* remains an experimental community, it will run itself.

From Egypt to the Promised Land²

For those of us who see *Walden Two* as the Promised Land and where we are as Egypt, we must remember that the wilderness stands between the two. The inclination to leave and start anew in some new place where we can build a new society never pans out because we take our old behavior with us, and it provides the contingencies for the behavior of the others in our new environs. So we might as well start right here, in Egypt, and deal with the smallest possible area, that with which we have direct and continuous contact — our home environment, our work environment, our leisure pursuits.

To help us make our way through the wilderness, I suggest we first look closely at our own behavior. Can we separate the technological reinforcers from the ceremonial reinforcers and turn our backs on the latter? What can we do to provide a

work environment for others that puts them in contact with technological reinforcers and mitigates the effect of ceremonial contingencies? Do we dare give affection freely and not hoard it to use it in return for access to ceremonial control? Is there any way that we can arrange even one little system where the behavior of everyone in it is equally valued, where everyone contributes to the group's welfare and partakes equally of the products of the group's efforts? To whatever degree we can do these things, we may progress through the wilderness.

We happy few won't be making the trip together, but in our separate times and places. But because of modern communications we can likely benefit from what others learn as they make the journey. Perhaps we will be able to make use of the times when our paths cross to remind each other of what we are working for. And we must begin. Time is short.

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