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WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY JR.

FIRING LINE

Guests: Nathan Azrin, professor of rehabilitation, University of Southern Illinois

David Premack, psychologist, University of California at Santa Barbara

Subject: "LIMITS OF BEHAVIORAL CONTROL"

SOUTHERN EDUCATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS ASSOCIATION

SECA PRESENTS

FIRING LINE



HOST: WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY, JR.

Guests: Nathan Azrin, professor of rehabilitation, University
of Southern Illinois
David Premack, psychologist, University of California
at Santa Barbara

Subject: "LIMITS OF BEHAVIORAL CONTROL"

Panelists: Jeff Greenfield
Mike Danaher
Dan Oliver

FIRING LINE is produced and directed by WARREN STEIBEL

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MR. BUCKLEY: This is the third in the series of four programs devoted to exploring the deeds and the misdeeds of the frontier thinkers of the world of social psychology. Today we've proposed to ask where exactly is behavioral technology taking us. On the assumption widely accepted that the psychologists are developing techniques for shaping human personalities and responses, it is conceptually possible to change what we have come to accept as the nature of man.

Aldous Huxley once wrote, "We have had religious revolutions. We have had political, industrial, economic and nationalistic revolutions. All of them, as our descendants will discover, were but ripples in an ocean of conservatism, trivial by comparison with the psychological revolution towards which we are rapidly moving. *That* will really be a revolution. When it is over the human race will give no further trouble."

Dr. Nathan Azrin is one of the world's leading behavioral psychologists. He trained at Harvard. He has attempted as research director of the Anna State Hospital in Illinois and as a professor of rehabilitation at the University of Southern Illinois to develop research strategies of the sort that can be used to cure, for instance, smoking, alcoholism, even slovenliness. He has written a number of books, including *The Token Economy* and, most recently, *Toilet Training in Less Than a Day - How to Do It*.

Dr. David Premack, a leading experimental psychologist at the University of California in Santa Barbara, has developed one of the major theories of motivation in the study of behavior. He studied at the University of Minnesota and has written a book which will be out soon on the construction of language for the chimpanzee.

I should like to begin by asking Dr. Azrin whether there is general agreement among psychologists as to what constitutes undesirable behavior in human beings.

MR. AZRIN: The answer to that is that there is as much general agreement among psychologists as there is in the general population. When a mother comes in and says she wants a child's behavior changed then, from her point of view, it's very clear what is undesirable. The boy is cussing, he's nasty, he's fighting. There is no consensus though, as you can see just by asking the child. He thinks it's just fine. The psychologist, whether he be behavior

modifier or any other type of psychologist, serves his client. Who his client is in this case is somewhat up in the air but you certainly would find no more agreement than emanates from his particular characterization as a behavior modifier or a psychologist than you would, I think, find in the general population.

MR. BUCKLEY: Well, is there a crystallizing position among psychologists of the kind that would strike laymen as controversial? For instance, one often hears about aggressive behavior and it's easy enough for everybody to agree that, for instance, the behavior of Adolf Hitler was aggressive. Some people would use that word to describe, say, an insurance salesman. Now, is there a line between Hitler and the insurance salesman that is also a line that distinguishes between the professional community and the lay community or are the differences, even there, pretty much identical with both groups?

MR. AZRIN: I don't think we're going to find out too much about what behavior modification's about by looking for any distinctive classification of what in this world is desirable and what is not desirable. Behavior modification goes under several names — reinforcement therapies, behavior therapies. They all have one thing in common — they stem from recent discoveries in the laboratory about the principles of conditioning and learning. At the applied level, the area where you and I really care, how does this have an impact on humans? The general question it asks is: How can I use these findings to help people solve their problems?

MR. BUCKLEY: As defined by them? That's what I want to know.

MR. AZRIN: No.

MR. BUCKLEY: As defined by you.

MR. AZRIN: No, it's a helping profession and, as in the case of any helping profession, your client is the one who comes to you and says he has a problem. And I try to point out one of the difficulties in doing this work. If the child came to you, the problem would be with the parent. If the parent came to you, the problem would be with the child. But that's not an insuperable problem. It's a helping profession. It'll solve problems as people perceive they are problems for

them, be they alcoholism or aggression or marital difficulties.

MR. BUCKLEY: In what sense has there developed a professional ethic that one could liken, say, to that of a lawyer? Suppose you were retained by Brezhnev and he said, "Well, Dr. Azrin, we have here a guy called Solzhenitsyn and he's very troublesome and we can arrange to deliver him into your care for as many weeks as you feel are professionally necessary. We want a very different man when he comes out." Now, would you consider such a thing as a professional assignment in the sense that you would if you were a lawyer assigned to protect someone?

MR. AZRIN: I'm nodding because I understand your question, not because I would consider it.

MR. BUCKLEY: Yes.

MR. AZRIN: What you're reflecting is this very extensive concern people have that here are these psychologists developing all of the very powerful ways of controlling people. Will they use it against me? And, that is, will they use it for their own devious, personal means or will they sell that service to the highest bidder?

That is no abstract question. We've seen that kind of thing happen — the atom bomb and many other such developments. We've seen things that have happened in the advertising industry where developments about psychology are used against the best interests of the consumer.

There's a characteristic of the behavior therapies that makes that kind of thing less likely to happen than in any of the other fields.

MR. BUCKLEY: Why?

MR. AZRIN: The reason is because it happens that in finding out what we have about how to use learning principles most effectively, we find that the best way to get people to change is to find out what their deepest, strongest values and desires are and the best way to get people to change is not by punitive, aversive, coercive means but by using those, and so it's a helping profession. What it means is that it'll go in and, in the example I gave, if I can belabor it —

MR. BUCKLEY: Sure.

MR. AZRIN: Well, let me take the example of toilet training. You want a child to stop wetting his pants. The way that your mother did it and my mother and many other mothers is you whack the kid. You yell at him and you spank him. You shame him, embarrass him. You occasionally tell him how nice it would be to be a good boy. What we found is a truism in the field is that your best effects you obtain not by having some inhibitory influence and discouraging the bad, but by finding out what the good things are, what is the positive aspect, finding out what the kid really likes, what people in general like, and then using both of these approaches, the positive and the negative.

MR. BUCKLEY: More carrot and less stick?

MR. AZRIN: Exactly. And so what you do is you find, in that example, who are his close friends. Who does he like to emulate? Who are the heroes in his life? Does he like attention from his mother? If so, then have an outpouring of affection, kindness, everything from as many people as you can, all geared toward the positive acts of toileting and not the kind of thing that everybody else had been using previously, which was to browbeat him when he had an accident.

So getting back to the original point, because substantively what we have found in behavior therapy is that the best way to solve people's problems is to find out what their desires are, their values, and help them achieve them by getting this behavior change, it means that in the process of changing people we are going to be satisfying their desires. So, in point of fact, what we have is just the opposite of this common preconception and fear. We don't have a group of psychologists around who've got a bag of tricks and are going to use them against your self-interests. Rather, what he's going to do is come up to you and ask things like, "What do you want out of life? What would you rather be doing than you're doing now? Who is it you'd like to be associating with?"

MR. BUCKLEY: Well, suppose he says, "I'd like to associate with free people," and you're talking to somebody in China or the Soviet Union. Would you then accept the challenge of trying subjectively to persuade him that he *was* free?

MR. AZRIN: No, no.

MR. BUCKLEY: Would you just give up on

that?

MR. AZRIN: No. You would find out what types of freedom existed in his environment, the extent to which he could exercise it and, as in every other case, you'd point out as much as you could the limit for him, the realities or the benefits or the catastrophe in that case that would result from this exercise of freedom. But it would be in terms of what is going to help him; and if, indeed, he will be shot for exercising a particular type of freedom, yours is a helping profession, you should identify those consequences of his act that are going to be in his best interest. But you *will not* take it on yourself to adopt either the attitude of the dictator and try to impose that on him. You couldn't because, as I say, if your objective is to help, then that means fulfilling everybody's desires as much as you can. You try to give this man as much freedom.

MR. BUCKLEY: Dr. Premack, is what we've heard so far in any sense controversial within the profession or is it just simply axiomatic?

MR. PREMACK: I think I would rather address that question from a slightly different point of view.

MR. BUCKLEY: Any way you want, sure.

MR. PREMACK: All right. I think what needs to be seen and is important to the somewhat larger question of whether we shall use these undoubtedly effective behavior technologies for other than manipulation of toilet training and the riddance of clearly undesirable behavior is whether we should use them on a broader scale for, ideally, the manipulation of the society. It becomes quite important to identify a basic precondition for reward; that is, something has to obtain in order for a reward to work. And this precondition is that you have to withhold from the organism that which he most deeply desires.

MR. BUCKLEY: So there has to be scarcity.

MR. PREMACK: I quite agree with my colleague, Dr. Azrin, that in fact the procedure will work best in a sense — or put it another way — *if* in a sense the therapist makes available to the person that which he most deeply desires, but the manner in which that is done is as follows. One finds out what the client most deeply desires, or what that sector of the society,

on a larger scale, most deeply desires and a caretaker organism then gains a monopolistic position with respect to that item. So one can recommend, for example, that one reward the pigeon and not punish it. One hears a good deal about that. One hears less about the fact that in the course of rewarding the pigeon, the first step is to starve it, that is, for a caretaker organism to gain control of the item which is subsequently used as a reward.

Therefore, if one were going to examine the utility of operant conditioning or reward procedures in the manipulation of society, he has to be cognizant of the fact that the first step is for some sector of the population to be in control of items which are deeply desired by another sector of the population, which are however not freely available to that second sector. The first sector will then, furthermore, set itself up as a judge of what the second sector shall do. Insofar as the members of the second sector perform the required act shall they be given limited access to this item which they most deeply desire.

Now, admittedly, in cases like toilet training where there's a marvelous consensus that nobody wants soiled people running around, we might all sit down and quickly agree that this should be done in the most efficient way. That is, what I'm trying to say in general is that whenever there is not only consensus, but I would go further and say "wise consensus," because I think we will agree that not all consensus is necessarily wise —

MR. BUCKLEY: Wise consensus is something you —

MR. PREMACK: I mean enlightened consensus; I mean consensus which is based not only upon the fact that we all share prejudices but a consensus that arises out of the fact that we have a profound knowledge of man in not only what he wants to be but whether what he wants to be is compatible with who he is, see? That's the second point I would develop. And that is that I see it as the task of the psychologist — and here Dr. Azrin and I agree. I don't look to the humanists to solve our problem. I think man is so easily confused that we have no recourse but to go to the experimental approach. That's our only hope. All right, now —

MR. BUCKLEY: Are you making a moral or psychological observation?

MR. PREMACK: Well, I hope I am not making an immoral observation. I think it's basically a superordinate observation. It says that the frailty of human knowledge is such and the human condition is such that, insofar as we have any hope as to our questions being answerable, it lies in an experimental approach. On that we are agreed.

The point I want to go to from there is the following. Let's take that as an assumption. If one takes that as an assumption, it becomes, I think, doubly important for the experimental psychologist not to proffer himself to society as its technician wherein he will show the procedures whereby consensual aims are most efficiently —

MR. BUCKLEY: Achieved.

MR. PREMACK: — realized. Instead, I think, at this stage of human ignorance, it behooves the experimentalist, as man's only hope, you see — that is why I wanted to develop that earlier point — to say, "You shall not employ me as your technician. Instead we need to know who is man, what is his nature, what are his operating principles, what should his objectives be in the most enlightened way?" So rather than simply saying, "Well, let's see now. What does society want done at the moment? I can show them how to do it," I think that instead the experimentalist, in lieu of the humanist's failure, must say, "My skills are not that readily —"

MR. BUCKLEY: For hire.

MR. PREMACK: "—for hire." Except in these few unarguable cases — now, fortunately, there are always a few unarguable cases, like, I think, I take toilet training to be one.

But in a large number of cases, there either is no consensus or if there is consensus, there shouldn't be consensus. It's questionable whether it is an enlightened consensus.

I think, rather, that the role of the experimentalist should be not to rush off excited by those technologies, which he unquestionably has for the first time, and employ them, but rather he should take these technologies, for they are man's only hope, and use them to answer the question, "Who is man? What is his nature and what should his aims be?"

MR. BUCKLEY: Right. So you are arguing

for an autonomous morality practiced by the profession, which guards over the use of the skills you develop so as not to lease them out for purposes that you consider to be antisocial or immoral. Do you have trouble with that, Dr. Azrin? You do.

MR. AZRIN: Yes.

MR. BUCKLEY: What's your trouble?

MR. AZRIN: Well, I think it's the kind of trouble that was almost implied by your tone when you asked it — an autonomous morality, something that really is devoid of society. Of course, the psychologists might be right but then, of course, the generals might be right, the politicians might be right. So long as they don't allow themselves to be obliged to follow the dictates of the society, the consumers that they're part of, then I don't see how they can make any prior claim to their superordinate wisdom. Let me go back and —

MR. BUCKLEY: They're not necessarily making claims to their superordinate wisdom. What they simply are saying is that whether it's superordinate or not, the skills they have to dispose of are theirs to dispose of and they choose not to dispose of them to certain clients for certain purposes. That can be said rather humbly.

MR. AZRIN: But how are they to decide? I'm trying to think of specific cases now. Belaboring the thing about the toilet training, the mother comes in —

MR. BUCKLEY: No, he granted that.

MR. PREMACK: No, that's the one case I'm consenting to.

MR. BUCKLEY: He said this is an example about which there is no problem.

MR. PREMACK: I think everybody wants to do it in the toilet rather than elsewhere.

MR. AZRIN: Yes, and that's why I was going back to that because —

MR. PREMACK: And that's not one we're disturbed about.

MR. AZRIN: — even in that extreme case, you will have a difference; you will have a diversity of values whether it's toilet training or anything else. The toilet training may seem

like it's all to the welfare of the mother, but the kid doesn't want it. He likes it the way it is. Her pediatrician, her psychoanalyst say that this is going to interfere with his anal stage and lead to all types of terrible personality traits later.

The wife comes in and says, "I want him cured of alcoholism."

MR. BUCKLEY: Okay, let's take that. How about alcoholism, that being something concerning which, as I understand from reading a couple of studies, there are occasionally two points of view, *i.e.*, what happens to the alcoholic whom you cure but whose personality is transformed, becomes sort of animal-like. Now, would this be something concerning which the ethics of the individual practitioner should interpose?

MR. AZRIN: Yes, that's an excellent example because, you see, many of the people come in for treatment for alcoholism, not because of their own volition but because the sheriff dragged them down there, and even if they are in a state hospital, they are likely to be there because there was the implication that if they didn't submit themselves for treatment then they would be prosecuted for some of the damage they did or the people that they beat. So there's a good deal of coercion —

MR. BUCKLEY: How would you handle a situation like that?

MR. AZRIN: Well, again, this general point that —

MR. BUCKLEY: In such a situation, who is your client? The state or the —

MR. AZRIN: Exactly. This is the point I'm making. You always have a multiplicity of clients. People are doing harm to each other and you want to represent all their interests. The community says, "I'm not going to let that man out here to destroy property." The wife says, "I don't want that man saying he is married to me and enjoying some of the privileges of it, but he won't support me." The children of the alcoholic are being beaten by him. The hospital says they're going to cure that man and the man says, "I like it. I like it just the way it is."

The realities of it turn out to be that the best way that you'll get that man to change is to find out what his values are, find out why he is drinking, what he is gaining by it, and showing him how he can

achieve those same things —

MR. BUCKLEY: By other means.

MR. AZRIN: Right, without the drinking. This is the general point I am making, that you have less to fear from the people in the reinforcement therapies than anyone else. Reinforcement is almost a euphemism for just happiness. What you are doing is trying to find the greatest happiness for the individual by working his little miracles. He is going to be doing it by making as many people involved in the interaction happy.

MR. BUCKLEY: But you are still talking about technique and I think that Dr. Premack is really *not* talking about technique.

MR. PREMACK: May I impose a point at that point?

MR. BUCKLEY: Sure.

MR. PREMACK: In point of fact, reinforcement is not readily equatable with happiness. It is only a very weak experiment that creates that illusion. A somewhat richer experiment shows readily that that is not the case. A richer experiment offers a choice between being put into a position in which reinforcement is possible as opposed to, let's say, a position in which punishment is possible, as opposed to a third alternative, in which neither apply and I have freedom. That is to say, in reinforcement, which Dr. Azrin equates with happiness, we have a contingency between something which you've got to do in order to have access to that which you deeply want.

An alternative to that is a society or is a condition in which what is made available to you are those things which you want without contingencies. When you do an animal experiment of that kind, which is a stronger experiment — and we have in the literature — where an animal is offered the alternative between doing X in order to have this desired thing, and moving freely between X and Y as it chooses, with very, very little qualification, the organism chooses not to be rewarded. It chooses instead that condition in which there are no contingencies.

MR. BUCKLEY: Does the word perversity exist in your profession as applying to that?

MR. PREMACK: Sure. In fact, you can

illustrate it with the — Up to a point there is a limited perversity, if you offer the organism the choice between having everything free, no contingencies, no requirements of doing X in order to do Y, you don't have to press the bar in order to eat, you can eat whenever you choose. Within limits, if you require the organism to bar press a little in order to eat, he may in fact choose it. That's sometimes jokingly called the Protestant ethic.

(laughter)

MR. BUCKLEY: Why jokingly?

MR. PREMACK: Well... (laughter) In point of fact, it's a transient state and if you make the cost for eating at all high, the organism readily enough prefers the condition of no contingency.

Let me just take this to its societal implication. If you say, "Well, I'm opposed to control" — now looking at it in a societal way — and you say this essentially as a humanist, and then a behaviorist such as myself, for example, says, "Well, you're being naive; you *are* being controlled. There is, in an informal way, reward going on, punishment going on. Your behavior is —"

MR. BUCKLEY: That's what Mr. Skinner in effect says.

MR. PREMACK: Sure, and I think correctly. Then the proposal from there is, "Since control is part and parcel of society let us do it in an astute way, rather than in the bumbling way in which it is done presently." Thus enters the science of psychology.

MR. BUCKLEY: Or diplomacy.

MR. PREMACK: I say instead let us go into this very, very knowingly, more so than we are presently. Let us examine, among the alternatives, the possibility of a society which, rather than seeking to do control in the most astute way, raises the questions, "What are the factors that make control possible? How might we limit them? How might we instead approach that condition in which there are no contingencies?" We know from proper laboratory experiments that in fact, rather than reinforcement being happiness, it is not at all happiness. It is freedom which is happiness. If by happiness you mean that condition which an organism prefers, the preferred condition is no contingency. It's the condition in which the

major precondition for reward is not —

MR. BUCKLEY: Are you making a cultural or a biological point?

MR. PREMACK: I am making a biological point. If you do the proper experiment, that is you increase the alternatives, you will find that organisms flee reward as readily as they flee punishment.

MR. BUCKLEY: That's pretty damned encouraging. It is encouraging for people who believe that freedom is in fact a biological urge, right? Which, I take it, it is fashionable to deny, isn't it, Dr. Azrin?

MR. AZRIN: Freedom in the sense of political freedom I am not sure anybody disagrees with.

MR. BUCKLEY: No, even of this kind of freedom.

MR. AZRIN: If you're talking about freedom of the will, yes, there's some disagreement.

MR. BUCKLEY: For instance, the Chrysler people who struck recently to reserve the right not to work overtime, notwithstanding that for the overtime work they were being paid at a double rate. I understand that it is a rejection of a projection of the reinforcement idea beyond certain limits, right?

MR. AZRIN: No, it's just don't get the wrong reinforcement.

MR. BUCKLEY: Money.

MR. AZRIN: Well, yes, and that's obviously only one of the many reinforcers in life. Apparently their free time and their ability to plan picnics on weekends and a night out were important.

MR. BUCKLEY: No, their freedom to choose as between them was what was unique there, right? They wanted the right to take it or not take it, as they chose.

MR. PREMACK: The freedom to escape the contingency is, I think, a very reasonable translation of that.

MR. BUCKLEY: Yes, that's right.

MR. PREMACK: And though it's not the

cleanest translation of the experimental case, it's nonetheless a highly suggestive one. But in terms of the laboratory, where you can set the alternatives up in quite a clean way, there is not much question but what the organism, given the choice between being rewarded and having available to it the reward on a non-contingent basis, that is without having to meet some prescribed response in order to engage in this preferred event, *i.e.*, freedom — there is no question in the laboratory that the latter is preferred. That is, with very minor qualifications, the organism's preference.

Whereas Skinner is fond of saying that one of the dangers of punishment is that if you seek to employ it outside the laboratory, the organism will leave the field, it is also the case that when the experiment is set up properly and the alternative of freedom is given, the organism will as readily flee reward. It will seek there, too, to leave the field. The preferred condition —

MR. BUCKLEY: Why?

MR. PREMACK: Well, because — this harks back to my original point. The basic precondition for reward is the withholding of the desired item by the caretaker organism, the requirement on his part of the less powerful organism that he meet a prescribed response condition in order to have access to this withheld item.

MR. BUCKLEY: Forgive me, why do you use the word "organism"? Would the word "agent" not serve?

MR. PREMACK: Sure, it's simply there are several different idioms. When I write in the psycholinguistic idiom I talk about agents; when I talk biologically I talk about organisms.

MR. BUCKLEY: I see.

MR. PREMACK: By which I mean to imply that I don't think this biological preference for the non-contingent condition is *Homo sapien*, primate, mammalian. I suspect that it will be found rather pervasively. That is one reason for using "organism."

MR. AZRIN: When you say the individual flees a reward, do I understand you correctly that they flee the reward or they flee the need for doing something to get the reward, that they'd rather get something for nothing? They're not fleeing the reward but

the work requirement.

MR. PREMACK: They flee that condition which is associated with reward. They move to the other side of the cage or that other portion of the space in which there is no possibility that they will be submitted to a condition of reward.

MR. AZRIN: Where there is no reward. That's an incredible statement. If there's five dollars there, I will walk over there.

MR. PREMACK: Oh, no. You misinterpret reward. You keep forgetting that reward is not the free access to an item, but reward is, rather, a second organism taking that which the first organism most desires, locking it up, and making it available to the second organism on the condition that it meet some prescribed condition. That is reward. Reward is not the act of —

MR. AZRIN: Yes, you're not just talking about reward and that is what I want to clear up. You are not talking about reward, you are talking about the necessity for having to work for that reward. What about the whole response-reinforcement relationship, not just the reward?

MR. PREMACK: Reward is a contingency between — the definition of reward involves the demonstration that an item X has increased the frequency of a response Y, leading it to a frequency greater than its base level. That is the very definition of reward, is it not?

MR. AZRIN: No, I understand perfectly what you are saying. There's a principle — Dave is very fortunate in having a principle named after him. And since Dave's last name is Premack, it's called the Premack Principle.

MR. PREMACK: Which speaks, I think, to the human predilection for alliteration, which I think owes nothing to reward.

MR. AZRIN: That's sort of like the Peter Principle.

MR. PREMACK: Exactly, and this has to do with — although probably the case is fairly minor — what I would regard as one of the operating principles of the species.

MR. AZRIN: What should I try for, then, Azrin's Axiom?

(laughter)

MR. PREMACK: I think you're in a good position.

(laughter)

MR. AZRIN: Yes, the thing I wanted to correct here is I think a misinterpretation that might have been laid to what I think is a profound point in the relationship Dave's talking about and that is that reward is not important. It is. That is not really what he is saying. He is talking about the whole reward-reinforcement relationship, because behavior therapies, reinforcement therapies, have that as their common denominator. They are therapies that are concerned with the reinforcement, the reward process. That's what they're all about.

MR. BUCKLEY: As I understand it, reward, in order to be defined, requires the elaboration of a relationship between the reward and that which in the absence of it you might have to endure, right?

MR. AZRIN: That is the technical definition and I think, let's see, at the risk of again highlighting some of the dangers that Dave was talking about, you have to induce privation, and also Dave's definition —

MR. BUCKLEY: Now, you didn't say induce privation, you have to recognize privation. Privation has to be around the corner.

MR. AZRIN: No, he said to induce it.

MR. PREMACK: I am saying that in order to carry out reinforcement, by which we mean increase our response —

MR. BUCKLEY: The opposite has to be palpable.

MR. PREMACK: Well, I am saying in order to get an organism to do more of something that it is presently doing, a precondition is that a second organism find out what the first organism really wants, not make this available to the first organism and instead make it available to him only on the condition that, in fact, he does more than he does normally of that event which is considered desirable.

MR. BUCKLEY: Sure. You have to have either hunger or an intimation of hunger in order to increase the desirability of the food.

MR. PREMACK: If you are using hunger in a very metaphorical sense.

MR. BUCKLEY: Either way.

MR. AZRIN: Now that you both understand the conception, could I try to proceed to the moral issue?

MR. BUCKLEY: Sure.

MR. PREMACK: Yes, sure.

MR. AZRIN: That is this conception is absolutely true when you are dealing with animals in the laboratory. If you want them to work for food, you must deprive them, similarly for water, or for heat. But when you are dealing with people problems, that's no problem having an adequate level of deprivation. People come in with problems. They come in, "I am unhappy. My friends hate me." You have a reinforcer available and that is getting the people to love him. You've got a reinforcer for the mother —

MR. BUCKLEY: They do not approach you unless they have experienced the deprivation, right? Otherwise they wouldn't call on you.

MR. AZRIN: Exactly. They have a problem. People come in with, in this sense, a deprivation already there. That is an alternative way of saying that they have problems. So it's really not too relevant —

MR. PREMACK: So you're hardly demolishing the notion. All you're saying — What you're saying is kind of interesting because it says the behavior therapist need not take upon his conscience the responsibility of inducing the deprivation. The deprivation is already there, he has only to exploit it.

MR. BUCKLEY: In the stipulated case, yes.

MR. AZRIN: Yes, right, and my point is —

MR. PREMACK: So therefore the notion is by no means demolished.

MR. AZRIN: Just the futility.

MR. PREMACK: On the contrary, you are admitting the necessity of the deprivation and you are simply saying that it exists. I do not have to take the responsibility for inducing it. On the contrary, I shall exploit

it.

The point that I raised a moment ago — and I want to take this out of the context in which a legitimate behavior modifier is helping a person realize consensually agreed upon societal aims. Now, there I do not think you and I have much argument. I have already conceded that. I am really speaking to those people who want to leap from the technology, which is efficacious with regard to toilet training as a concrete example, to the manipulation of society and to the cure of its ills. And I say even if you have a technology which in fact could do well —

MR. BUCKLEY: You wouldn't know what to do.

MR. PREMACK: — what is presently done ill or bunglingly, I think we ought to stand back from it and say, "Wait a minute. Let's look at the larger range of alternatives." For example, let us examine the anthropological data. Is control necessary? That is, is it in the nature of man that we shall have control? If I were persuaded of that by a profound review of the anthropological data, then I probably would acquiesce to the desire to control in the most efficacious way. But I am not persuaded of that, you see.

MR. BUCKLEY: Can I be very concrete? In the last couple of years an awful lot of American observers from every profession, journalists, economists, scientists and so on and so forth, have visited the People's Republic of China, as I have been trained to call it, and they have come back almost unanimously saying that here they have found a genuinely contented society. It happens also, as we all know, to be, I suppose, the most totalitarianized society in the recorded history of the world and we also know that they have experimented with institutional and extra-institutional stimuli, which can be described as psychological in imagination — rallies and slogans and so on and so forth.

Now, given the consensus among American observers, given the almost universal acclamation that has been given to this society, do we learn anything about the subject we're here to discuss? Do we learn anything about the technology behind which behavior is manipulated and the direction toward which that society is manipulated? Are we satisfied to conclude from the general efficiency of the Chinese episode that this in itself justifies the use of these behavioral techniques to produce the

modern China? Or do you consult other criteria and say, "Oh, no, no, I, Dr. Azrin, or I, Dr. Premack, could never myself consent to behave as a consultant to Mao Tse-tung or Chou En-lai, because I would not be a party to this kind of manipulation." How do you bounce off that?

MR. AZRIN: Well, I hate to be put in the position of saying I would be willing to lend myself out for hire to someone who is considered to be a dictator; but let's take a hypothetical situation in which someone in behavior therapies would do that. What he would be doing simultaneously is trying to find out how to satisfy the desires of the governed as well as those who are governing.

MR. BUCKLEY: "He" being the psychologist?

MR. AZRIN: "He" being the psychologist. That is what he would be asking. So if one is a dictator and really wants somebody to be subdued and wants no deviation from their own preset norm, the last person to ask would be someone in behavior modification because he is going to be looking out for the interests of all clients. He is going to be exploring all of their values and their desires and trying to use them to their utmost.

He would be much better off getting someone from another area of behavioral control — an educator in the narrow sense of the word, "All I want is for the person to learn that. That's all, I have no other criterion but that." Or a military man, "I want a society which is militarily prepared." Or someone in religion, "I want everybody who is a believer, whatever your belief is."

The behavior modifier, by working in this very dynamic interplay of desires that people have, is constantly going to be pushing this applet over. In the case of the mother who tried to toilet train, he is constantly saying, "But your kid wants this," or to the alcoholic, "But your wife wants that."

MR. BUCKLEY: Suppose you are retained to help with the minority that continues to stand in the way of the consensus that is desired by the engineers of the society. You would accept that as a formal petition, wouldn't you, I mean scientifically proper. Or there, once again, do you consult moral codes that are extrinsic to the situation?

MR. AZRIN: Yes, and let me give an actual example from my own experience.

One of the things that we are trying to develop now is how do you get jobs for the unemployed. Oddly enough, no one had ever worried about that. Everybody worried about how you select among those who are looking for positions. Here you are now with an individual who has some physical liabilities, psychological liabilities. He is called part of the disenfranchised masses. And you now accept him as your client and what you're going to do is try to get him the best type of job that is available.

MR. BUCKLEY: Now why are you consulted for something like this?

MR. AZRIN: Well, he's asked. Remember, it is a helping profession to help people with problems. This person has a problem and by virtue of this profession, it's my problem to solve his problem.

MR. BUCKLEY: Yes, but this isn't something that you're trained — or are you trained to make him happy?

MR. AZRIN: Oh, I elected to do that, right. I look for problems. Where is it that the greatest need in society is? And here is a group of people, be they little infants who are abused by their parents, or retarded who are neglected in institutions, or people who are unemployed. There are the problems; my job, as I see it professionally, is to solve people's problems that are of a psychological nature. And so I seek out that problem and try to help him.

If I were working for the employer I would have a different kind of attack, but it would be — What I am trying to torpedo here is this common preconception of people in the behavior modification field, of dealing with people mechanically, coldly, using them, in the nasty sense of that phrase, against their self-interests and being at the hire of dictators, and I think that the actuality of it is exactly the opposite.

MR. BUCKLEY: I can give you a rough example, not intending, God knows, to impugn your profession but simply because we do live in a world, for instance, defined by Mr. Skinner, in which he simply refuses to say what is right and what is wrong except as a result of, you know, episodic plebiscites, and that really makes us all technicians in a way, as I understand it, and I think that this is a difficulty which makes you just a little bit —

MR. AZRIN: Defensive?

MR. BUCKLEY: Defensive, yes.

MR. AZRIN: (laughing) And that's why I answered the question before you asked it, right.

(laughter)

MR. BUCKLEY: I see, I see.

MR. PREMACK: May I speak to that point for a moment?

MR. BUCKLEY: Yes, sir.

MR. PREMACK: As to whether or not the behaviorists or the behavior modifiers are proverbial overturners of the applecart, it would be comforting to think that they were but, in my experience, they are not.

MR. BUCKLEY: Are not because of a delinquency or professionally aren't?

MR. PREMACK: On the contrary, let me try to elaborate a point that grows out of disagreeing with the conception of the behavior modifier as one who isn't going to carry out the dictates of a caretaker or impowered sector of the society, but instead is going to overturn the applecart, that is, he is not going to go along with the aspirations of the power sector of society.

Let me get to a concrete case. In my travels through the southern sector of the United States and the eastern sector in some recent years, I discovered a number of dilapidated, former colonial houses which now have a strong smell of urine rather than mint julep, in which are housed a number of problem children. They are being behavior modified. They don't attend. In one way or another they are disturbing in the classroom. They are now being trained so as not to be disturbing in the classroom, so they can be restored to the usual school as readily as possible and not be disturbing to the teacher. This restoration is being carried out by behavior modifiers, people like Dr. Azrin and others trained in that same way.

I don't find one of them to ask the question, "Why is the child not attending?" Instead, they are told the child is not attending and they use such technologies as they have to restore attention. There is another alternative, which seems to go completely unexamined, and that is as follows: They are unattending because the

curriculum is in fact ill-suited to man. Why is it ill-suited to man?

MR. BUCKLEY: To them? To man or to them?

MR. PREMACK: To men, to them, and perhaps to children in general. In fact perhaps it's generally unsuitable or at least non-optimal. Indeed, let me ask, how could it possibly be optimal given how little we know about man? Our knowledge of man is so slight that the farthest reaches that you can describe for human intellect I can presently simulate with a chimpanzee. I can draw either of two conclusions — that man and a chimpanzee are identical —

MR. BUCKLEY: Oooh, that's the most implausible line in history, to quote —

MR. PREMACK: Well, one can conclude from that either that man and a chimpanzee are identical, or rather conclude, as I do, namely that the reason one can simulate so much of man with a chimpanzee presently is because we know so little about man.

Now, given that our ignorance is of that kind, the point is how could one suppose that the curriculum would be optimal. It cannot be. Our knowledge of man is very slight, consequently the things that we teach our children cannot conceivably be optimal. Accordingly, rather than behavior —

MR. BUCKLEY: It can't be optimal as applied to all children alike.

MR. PREMACK: As applied conceivably to any child.

MR. BUCKLEY: Oh, I see. You mean even William Pitt the Younger could have been taught better?

MR. PREMACK: Yes.

MR. BUCKLEY: Goddamn. That would have changed the course of history. But I see your point.

MR. PREMACK: Instead, therefore, saying "He doesn't attend, I can show you how to make him attend," I think that at least some attention should be given to the possibility that what he is being asked to attend to is not ideally suited to him as a Homo sapien. And some of this very powerful technology, which —

MR. BUCKLEY: You mean him as a Homo sapien or him as John Smith?

MR. PREMACK: I mean him as a member of a species, because I do not make the assumption that we are *tabula rasas* who end up behaving in one way or another, depending upon our reinforcement contingencies. I make the assumption, instead, that as a member of a species we have a number of operating principles, we have a number of dispositions, we have a number of predilections most of which remain to be discovered. One of the major tasks — indeed, from my point of view, the major task of somebody's skill in behavior technology is to use that technology to discover who is man, rather than assuming forthwith that the curriculum which Johnny is presently getting is ideal and I should lend my skills to assuring that he attend to this curriculum. I think, on the contrary, that we —

MR. BUCKLEY: This is an empirical inquiry, right?

MR. PREMACK: Absolutely. My observation is that damn few, too few, behavior modifiers want to play that game at all. They want to come in with their little technology and assure that Johnny does attend to the curriculum rather than to ask, "Is the curriculum ideal? Who is man? And is he perhaps not attending because there is a damn good sense in which what he is being required to attend to is non-optimal if not outright nonsense?"

Now that seems to me a substantially more justifiable objective for behavior technology. Indeed because we have these technologies today we are, for the first time, in a much stronger position to be able to give empirical answers to who is man, what are his predispositions, what are his predilections, rather than going — See, this takes us back also to society. Why honor the consensus which society has arrived at concerning goals for man? I say those, too, should be enlightened insofar as possible by a science of man. That I think is what the technology of experimental psychology can best direct itself to.

MR. BUCKLEY: Mr. Jeff Greenfield.

MR. GREENFIELD: Hello.

MR. BUCKLEY: Welcome home.

MR. GREENFIELD: Thank you. Just to clear something up briefly, if you have an animal in a laboratory and give him a choice between pressing a lever and getting food, and not pressing a lever and not getting food, he will choose to press the lever, right?

MR. PREMACK: Definitely.

MR. GREENFIELD: We are not talking about gerbils with Goldwater buttons.

MR. PREMACK: No, what I'm talking about is —

MR. GREENFIELD: Okay. Now the more important point I think is that you contradicted yourself rather substantially. You said at the outset that humanism has failed, the experimenters are the hope of the world. And yet really the reason why you would not be a consultant to a dictator attempting to change "deviant forms of behavior," like a Solzhenitsyn, is because of humanist values. If you lacked humanist values, if your goal was strictly result-oriented, a peaceful society where people pick up litter, don't steal, China, if we can believe Mr. Alsop, which is always dubious, may have achieved this, but at the cost of human freedom.

MR. PREMACK: Let me reply to that very briefly. First, and the first point is about all I need, humanists have no monopoly on values. Values are the province of man. None of us has a monopoly on values.

MR. GREENFIELD: No, no, but there are values beyond the way people behave that count, right?

MR. PREMACK: Values are, I would repeat, not the monopoly of any profession. The human being desires a variety of things. There is no science, to my knowledge, or non-science, which is entitled to make exclusive pronouncements on what the values should be. That is the enterprise of man at large. It does not belong to any individual field.

MR. BUCKLEY: That's not really what you're worried about, is it?

MR. GREENFIELD: No, no. But you and I may be using the phrase differently. What I mean is you cannot simply look to the way people behave to determine what it is you would lend your talents to. You cannot say,

"Well, I can make a society in which people do not commit crimes, do not mug, do not litter, do not do many of the things which we in American cities are victims of."

MR. BUCKLEY: And therefore improve society.

MR. GREENFIELD: And therefore improve society, because we left out the thing that Mr. Buckley, I think accurately, pointed to, the fact that this is not a free society.

MR. PREMACK: On that score, I think I entertain a hope which resolves some of the usual paradox between a valueless science on the one hand and a value-concerned humanism on the other hand. That hope is as follows: When we come to know man in depth, and I would repeat — and I think that in my limited time I cannot make this as clear as I wish to make it—we know virtually nothing about man. Our knowledge of man is trivial as things stand. The hope that I entertain is that when we come to know man in depth and detail, we will be much less puzzled about the apparent paradox between saying on the one hand this is what he should do, but this is what he wants to do — from which you should be able to infer that I am rather more optimistic about what in fact may be the basic predilections, once you come to know them, of a species which has survived as long as we have and has evolved to the monumental degree of soul, intelligence, spirit.

On the other hand, I am much more optimistic about what our basic predilections are and I suspect that when they come to be deeply known, we may not have so acute an incompatibility between what man really wants to do and what he should do. I expect to see that disparity diminish with increasing knowledge of who is man and understanding of the conditions that give him anguish, under which he pursues his various spiritual activities. I do not see him as a horrible, dark, demented creature for whom there will always be an abyss between what he does on the one hand and what he should do.

MR. BUCKLEY: Mr. Mike Danaher is a student at Yale University. Mr. Danaher.

MR. DANAHER: Yes. Dr. Azrin, you were very modest about the possibilities of your profession. I have questions in two related areas. First of all, how successfully can one change someone's behavior without the

cooperation of the subject and, secondly, you maintained several times that you must work with the deepest desires of the subject. Must these desires be taken as given and are they taken as given? Mr. Skinner, I believe, has suggested that they can be changed, too.

MR. AZRIN: Taking them one at a time, the first question was can you do anything without the cooperation of — not a subject, he's a client who has come in for help. If he has come in for help, then he usually gives his cooperation. That is true in almost every instance except those cases in which his rights have been delegated to someone else, a child or a parent.

MR. DANAHER: I'm rather curious if he doesn't come in as a client, perhaps a prisoner in the penal system whom society would like to change.

MR. AZRIN: Yes, and that would be one example. Someone who is retarded, in which case his institution or his caretakers have the civil responsibility for him is another example. You won't get very far for the reasons that are completely empirical, that your greatest success in changing people, if you are going to use principles of learning and motivation, is to grab hold of their most sincere and deepest motivations. If you have somebody who is fighting you then nothing much is going to happen. So in each of these examples, in the prison or a child whom you want to toilet train or stop from thumb-sucking or hitting someone, your best bet is to try to bring to bear the satisfactions that will accrue when he acts civilly toward other children, or in the case of the prisoner the satisfactions that will accrue when he learns alternative ways of getting his objectives, and in the case of the retarded, start to strengthen a constructive happy recreation. Then it would be easy to change.

As long as you deal with him in resistive capacity because of the responsibility delegated by someone else, you will have a very, very difficult time doing it. You all know or have perhaps read *A Clockwork Orange*, right, in which the aversive control and some of these conditions are depicted in a rather gross fashion. In talking to Drs. Eysenck and Racheman, who are the people who really developed this procedure to its ultimate, that's in England, I asked them their reaction to it and both of them said the same thing. They said if only their procedure were that effective, or even half that effective. What is everybody

worried about, because what you had was really a resistive client. You had something being done against someone's wishes. Nothing much is going to happen, not that it can't happen. You can get a big enough two-by-four and use it frequently enough so that almost anybody is going to come under. But if you are talking about learning-motivated, psychologically induced changes, as I say, the nature of behavior modification is such that you have less to fear from that than anything else. Your other question — Could you remind me?

MR. DANAHER: Yes.

MR. BUCKLEY: Briefly.

MR. DANAHER: Can you change the desires of the subject involved?

MR. AZRIN: I will answer it similarly briefly. Yes, but it is much easier to find out what the desires are and use them. You ask them, "What is it you would like in life?"

MR. BUCKLEY: Mr. Dan Oliver.

MR. OLIVER: Dr. Premack, you say that organisms, as you say, flee reward. Could that be because rewards are subject to an indifference curve, that after the person, or whatever, has had enough five dollar bills he simply retreats to the other end of the cage, finding five dollar bills unexciting, or chocolate cake or whatever, and that you simply misidentify the true reward?

MR. PREMACK: No, because the experiment contains the control for that possibility, which is free access to five dollar bills or chocolate cake, or whatever was previously established to be the most probable event. The alternatives are work for the chocolate cake on the one hand, or have the chocolate cake as an open, unfettered opportunity with which you can make commerce as you choose. The organism flees from the requirement that he perform prescribed responses in order to have access to the chocolate cake. He flees from that in order to have access to the chocolate cake in a way in which he chooses — when he wants it, in the amounts that he wants, under schedules that are under his control. So by no means is he fleeing chocolate cake; rather he is fleeing the requirement that he work in order to have access to chocolate cake.

MR. BUCKLEY: Thank you very much, Dr.

Premack, thank you, Dr. Azrin, gentlemen
of the panel, thank you very much.