

"The trick is to put those techniques into effect," said Castle. "You still have to solve the practical problems of government and politics."

#### GOVERNMENTS CANNOT SOLVE THE PROBLEMS

"Government and politics! It's not a problem of government and politics at all. That's the first plank in the Walden Two platform. You can't make progress toward the Good Life by political action! Not under any current form of government! You must operate upon another level entirely. What you need is a sort of Nonpolitical Action Committee: keep out of politics and away from government except for practical and temporary purposes. It's not the place for men of good will or vision.

"As we use the term these days, government means power—mainly the power to compel obedience," Frazier went on. "The techniques of government are what you would expect—they use force or the threat of force. But that's incompatible with permanent happiness—we know enough about human nature to be sure of that. You can't force a man to be happy. He isn't even likely to be happy if he's forced to follow a supposedly happy pattern. He must be led into it in a different way if it's to be satisfying." . . .

"It sounds a little like the old program of anarchy," said Castle.

"By no means. I'm not arguing for no government at all, but only for none of the existing forms. We want a government based upon a science of human behavior. Nothing short of that will produce a permanent social structure. For the first time in history we're ready for it, because we can now deal with human behavior in accordance with simple scientific principles. The trouble with the program of anarchy was that it placed too much faith in human nature. It was an offshoot of the philosophy of perfectionism."

"But you yourself seem to have unbounded faith in human nature," I said.

"I have none at all," said Frazier bluntly, "if you mean that men are naturally good or naturally prepared to get along with each other. We have no truck with philosophies of innate goodness—or evil, either, for that matter. But we do have faith in our power to change human behavior. We can make men adequate for group living—to the satisfaction of everybody. That was our faith, but it's now a fact." . . .

#### SOCIAL PLANNING IS NECESSARY

"I've admitted neither power nor despotism. But you're quite right in saying that I've exerted an influence and in one sense

will continue to exert it forever. I believe you called me a *primum mobile*—not quite correctly, as I found upon looking the term up last night. But I did plan Walden Two—not as an architect plans a building, but as a scientist plans a long-term experiment, uncertain of the conditions he will meet but knowing how he will deal with them when they arise. In a sense, Walden Two is predetermined, but not as the behavior of a beehive is determined. Intelligence, no matter how much it may be shaped and extended by our educational system, will still function as intelligence. It will be used to puzzle out solutions to problems to which a beehive would quickly succumb. What the plan does is to keep intelligence on the right track, for the good of society rather than of the intelligent individual—or for the eventual rather than the immediate good of the individual. It does this by making sure that the individual will not forget his personal stake in the welfare of society."

#### THE ENVIRONMENT IS RESPONSIBLE

The real issue is the effectiveness of techniques of control. We shall not solve the problems of alcoholism and juvenile delinquency by increasing a sense of responsibility. It is the environment which is "responsible" for the objectional behavior, and it is the environment, not some attribute of the individual, which must be changed. We recognize this when we talk about the punitive contingencies in the natural environment. Running head-on into a wall is punished by a blow to the skull, but we do not hold a man responsible for not running into walls nor do we say that nature holds him responsible. Nature simply punishes him when he runs into a wall. When we make the world less punishing or teach people how to avoid natural punishments, as by giving them rules to follow, we are not destroying responsibility or threatening any other occult quality. We are simply making the world safer.

B.F. Skinner, *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*, 1971.

"But you are forestalling many possibly useful acts of intelligence which aren't encompassed by your plan. You have ruled out points of view which may be more productive. You are implying that T.E. Frazier, looking at the world from the middle of the twentieth century, understands the best course for mankind forever."

"Yes, I suppose I do."

"But that's absurd!"

"Not at all. I don't say I foresee the course man will take a

hundred years hence, let alone forever, but I know which he should take now."

"How can you be sure of it? It's certainly not a question you have answered experimentally."

"I think we're in the course of answering it," said Frazier.

"But that's beside the point. There's no alternative. We must take that course."

"But that's fantastic. You who are taking it are in a small minority."

Frazier sat up.

"And the majority are in a big quandary," he said. "They're not on the road at all, or they're scrambling back toward their starting point, or sidling from one side of the road to the other like so many crabs. What do you think two world wars have been about? Something as simple as boundaries or trade? Nonsense. The world is trying to adjust to a new conception of man in relation to men."

"Perhaps it's merely trying to adjust to despots whose ideas are incompatible with the real nature of man."

"Mr. Castle," said Frazier very earnestly, "let me ask you a question. I warn you, it will be the most terrifying question of your life. What would you do if you found yourself in possession of an effective science of behavior? Suppose you suddenly found it possible to control the behavior of men as you wished. What would you do?"

"That's an assumption?"

"Take it as one if you like. I take it as fact. And apparently you accept it as a fact too. I can hardly be as despotic as you claim unless I hold the key to an extensive practical control."

"What would I do?" said Castle thoughtfully. "I think I would dump your science of behavior in the ocean."

"And deny men all the help you could otherwise give them?"

"And give them the freedom they would otherwise lose forever!"

"How could you give them freedom?"

"By refusing to control them!"

"But you would only be leaving the control in other hands."

"Whose?"

"The charlatan, the demagogue, the salesman, the ward heeler, the bully, the cheat, the educator, the priest—all who are now in possession of the techniques of behavioral engineering."

"A pretty good share of the control would remain in the hands of the individual himself."

"That's an assumption, too, and it's your only hope. It's your only possible chance to avoid the implications of a science of

< behavior. If man is free, then a technology of behavior is impossible. But I'm asking you to consider the other case."

"Then my answer is that your assumption is contrary to fact and any further consideration idle."

"And your accusations—?"

"—were in terms of intention, not of possible achievement."

Frazier sighed dramatically.

"It's a little late to be proving that a behavioral technology is well advanced. How can you deny it? Many of its methods and techniques are really as old as the hills. Look at their frightful misuse in the hands of the Nazis! And what about the techniques of the psychological clinic? What about education? Or religion? Or practical politics? Or advertising and salesmanship? Bring them all together and you have a sort of rule-of-thumb technology of vast power. No, Mr. Castle, the science is there for the asking. But its techniques and methods are in the wrong hands— they are used for personal aggrandizement in a competitive world or, in the case of the psychologist and educator, for futilely corrective purposes. My question is, have you the courage to take up and wield the science of behavior for the good of mankind? You answer that you would dump it in the ocean!" . . .

#### THE FEELING OF FREEDOM

"The question is: Can men live in freedom and peace? And the answer is: Yes, if we can build a social structure which will satisfy the needs of everyone and in which everyone will want to observe the supporting code. But so far this has been achieved only in Walden Two. Your ruthless accusations to the contrary, Mr. Castle, this is the freest place on earth. And it is free precisely because "we make no use of force or the threat of force." Every bit of our research, from the nursery through the psychological management of our adult membership, is directed toward that end—to exploit every alternative to forcible control. By skillful planning, by a wise choice of techniques we increase the feeling of freedom.

"It's not planning which infringes upon freedom, but planning which uses force. A sense of freedom was practically unknown in the planned society of Nazi Germany, because the planners made a fantastic use of force and the threat of force."

"No, Mr. Castle, when a science of behavior has once been achieved, there's no alternative to a planned society. We can't leave mankind to an accidental or biased control. But by using the principle of positive reinforcement—carefully avoiding force or the threat of force—we can preserve a personal sense of freedom." . . .

Are we free?!

The BIG question

who controls whom?

#### THE ENVIRONMENT CREATES HUMANITY

"But the triumph of democracy doesn't mean it's the best government. It was merely the better in a contest with a conspicuously bad one [Fascism of World War II]. Let's not stop with democracy. It isn't, and can't be, the best form of government, because it's based on a scientifically invalid conception of man. It fails to take account of the fact that in the long run *man is determined by the state*. A *laissez-faire* philosophy which trusts to the inherent goodness and wisdom of the common man is incompatible with the observed fact that men are made good or bad and wise or foolish by the environment in which they grow."

"But which comes first," I asked, "the hen or the egg? Men build society and society builds men. Where do we start?"

"It isn't a question of starting. The start has been made. It's a question of what's to be done from now on."

"Then it's to be revolution, is that it?" said Castle. "If democracy can't change itself into something better—"

"Revolution? You're not a very rewarding pupil, Mr. Castle. The change won't come about through power politics at all. It will take place at another level altogether."

"What level?"

Frazier waved his hand toward the window, through which we could see the drenched landscape of Walden Two.

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WALDEN II = EXPERIMENTAL UTOPIA

FRAZIER = B.F. SKINNER

"Behaviorist" ↑

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VIEWPOINT

"Men are made good or bad and wise or foolish by the environment in which they grow."

## HUMANS CAN BUILD UTOPIA

B.F. Skinner

Behaviorist psychology is one of many schools of thought in the discipline of psychology. B.F. Skinner (1903–1990) led behaviorism for many years by doing research and by writing many popular books about behaviorism. The following selection is taken from his novel, *Walden Two*. This novel tells the story of several visitors coming to an experimental community called Walden Two. The imaginary community was established by Frazier (who represents the actual beliefs of Skinner) and others to show that behaviorist theories are correct. Life at Walden Two is carefully planned so that everyone "feels" free and happy. The following viewpoint gives a few of the discussions between Frazier and the visitors.

As you read, consider the following questions:

1. According to Frazier, are humans naturally good or bad?
2. Why does Frazier argue in *Walden Two* that social planning is necessary?
3. Castle, who is against Frazier in the novel, wants to protect human freedom. Why does Frazier talk about giving people a "feeling of freedom" and "sense of freedom"?

Excerpted from *Walden Two*, by B.F. Skinner (New York: Macmillan). Copyright 1948, 1976, by B.F. Skinner. Reprinted with permission from the B.F. Skinner Foundation.

We returned to the dining rooms by way of a kitchen door. Frazier came up as we were being served, and pointed to the large central table in one of the modern rooms, to which he had just moved his tray.

"Well," he said, as we began to eat, "there isn't much left to show you. We've shot our bolt. I'm curious to know whether you've been properly impressed?"

"'Impressed' is scarcely the word," I said. "It's the most soul-shaking experience of my life."

"A very interesting experiment, there's no doubt about that," said Castle. "Utopia come to life, apparently."

### UTOPIA CAN BE REAL

"Utopia, indeed," said Frazier. "And do you know what single fact I find most incredible?" He looked eagerly from one of us to the other, particularly at Rodge, and I began to wonder whether he was not satisfied with two converts out of six.

"The fact that it's been a success, I should imagine," I said.

"What's incredible about that? How could it possibly have failed? No, I'm referring to a detail which distinguishes Walden Two from all the imaginary Utopias ever dreamed of. And a very simple thing, too." He continued to look at us, but we were completely at sea.

"Why, the fact that it exists right here and now!" he announced at last. "In the very midst of modern civilization!" He watched for the effect upon us, but it could not have been very marked.

"The Utopias have tended to be a bit out of things," said Castle at last, a little doubtfully, but beginning to get the point.

"Out of things! I should say! Why, 'Utopia' is Greek for 'nowhere,' and Butler spelled 'nowhere' backwards! Bacon chose a lost Atlantis, and Shangri-La is cut off by the highest mountains in the world. Bellamy and Morris felt it necessary to get away by a century or two in the dimension of time. Out of things, indeed! It's the first rule of the Utopian romance: 'Get away from life as we know it, either in space or time, or no one will believe you!'"

"The one fact that I would cry from every housetop is this: the Good Life is waiting for us—here and now!" he continued. I almost fancied I heard a Salvation Army drum throbbing in the distance. "It doesn't depend on a change in government or on the machinations of world politics. It doesn't wait upon an improvement in human nature. At this very moment we have the necessary techniques, both material and psychological, to create a full and satisfying life for everyone."