

BOOK REVIEWS

The Illusion of Attitude Change: 'Toward a response Contagion' theory of persuasion by J. M. Nuttin, Jr. London: Academic Press (1974), cloth N.Z. \$17.00.

I have not been more impressed by a book on research in social psychology since my first graduate days. Professor Nuttin's book 'The Illusion of Attitude Change' contains in it all that will make it a classic in the years to come. There is no area in social psychology more researched and more confused than that of social attitudes and persuasion, yet here we have not only the impressive findings of thirteen experiments, but also the drawing together of most of the major effects obtained in studies of dissonance and counter attitudinal advocacy change under one parsimonious theoretical framework.

After examining some of the well known dissonance experiments, a lucid and thorough programme of research is explicated showing that interpretation of the results of the high reward/dissonance experiments of Festinger and Carlsmith and the great number of studies which followed were not only misleading and inconclusive but provided no support for dissonance theory. Nuttin's experiments point to the clear fact that the usual inverse monetary reward-attitude change relationship could in no way be explained by the importance of money or the discrepancy between private initial position and public advocacy; thus 'cognitive' dissonance interpretations do not apply. He then convincingly demonstrates that it is the embarrassing, unusual or upsetting nature of the reward treatment which produces the marked attitude change that he and others have repeatedly observed. The direction and extent of attitude-change is in some way dependent on an immediately preceding dominant response and the process is termed response contagion.

In a series of simple, salient and well controlled experiments, commonly held concepts such as consistency, self esteem, and social desirability, are ruled out as explanations for the attitude change. Response contagion is convincingly applied as the major construct for the change. The prevailing evaluation characteristics of the most recent ongoing response are shown to be responsible for the subsequent change. The generality of the response contagion hypothesis is potently demonstrated in experiments and by application to other classical studies.

Apart from the theoretical importance of this work Professor Nuttin's main contribution lies in the clarity with which he has presented both theoretical issues and his extensive research. No one, for example, can accuse the attitudinal issues of being trivial. Experiments dealing with exam reform must be highly salient for all of his student subjects who were initially opposed to their present exam system.

I for one have been greatly served by this book. My own doubts

about the current status of social psychology have been confirmed for, in comparison to the characteristic research and theory of the last 15 years, this book stands out as a monument to clear thinking and scientific integrity. Taken seriously, the applications of the findings presented in this study could have a profound effect on social psychology. I have doubts however, since so many psychologists are just as prone as any other scientists to have too much of a vested interest in their theories and research to give them up. The truth that lies within this book may well go unheeded for some time to come.

Nicky Hamid

Elements of a two-process theory of learning by J. A. Gray. London: Academic Press, 1975. vi + 423 pp.

This is a commendable book, not least because it is a single author's substantial exposition of a particular theoretical perspective applied to a variety of studies of learning and conditioning, largely of non-human subjects.

The two processes of Gray's theory are the familiar ones of classical and instrumental conditioning. However, the book is anything but a tedious restatement of old truisms. The author is not afraid to be controversial, adopting, for example, a *contingency* rather than a *contiguity* view of classical conditioning. Ample note is also taken of recent findings—autoshaping, learned taste-aversions, preparedness in avoidance, operant conditioning of visceral responses—which have upset conventional wisdom.

The first three chapters are the best of the book. In them the elements of the two-process theory are developed. In the remaining chapters the aim seems to be to show how classical and instrumental conditioning are inextricably woven into most of the phenomena studied by learning theorists—drive, reinforcement, punishment, emotion, frustration, avoidance and escape. These chapters cover much interesting material, but the choice of topics seems a little odd. Much attention is paid to the drive-reduction theory of reinforcement but no mention is made of concurrent matching; the chapter on punishment is devoted to approach-avoidance conflict and passive avoidance, but no mention is made of Dunham's work on punishment. Both of these omitted topics would have fitted directly into the discussion of the "calculus of probabilities" which is a significant feature of the book.

The preface indicates that the book grew out of teaching, and the style confirms this. Care is taken to define terms. There is substantial redundancy in the discussion of key topics, ample cross-referencing, many original graphs and tables are reproduced to illustrate claims about data, and key experiments are described in sufficient detail for them to be understood without recourse to the original paper. The literature cited draws quite extensively on East European psychology, and includes much recent work, up to 1973.

The technical vocabulary used is generally consistent with that used in the experimental analysis of behaviour; one major exception is the use of the term "reinforcement" to cover consequences of behaviour which both increase and decrease rates of responding. These "reinforcing events" are subdivided into rewards (which increase rates) and punishments (which decrease rates) i.e., Gray uses "reward" where Skinner substituted "reinforcement".

The book is not a systematic text, nor would it be easily understood by students with little background in the study of learning. But, for a class of advanced students it would serve admirably as a provocative starting point.

Neville M. Blampied