

The Button Factory



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Where do your personal buttons come from, the ones that can be so easily pushed? Over the holidays you may have returned to the bosom of your complicated family; to the psychosocial factory where your original buttons were manufactured and installed, and where they know how to press them! A personal button is just a trigger that initiates some conditioned psychosocial response, as the proverbial nuclear button initiates an elaborate process of global annihilation. The theoretical

foundation of personal button manufacturing is behaviorism and operant conditioning, which dominated academic psychology during the middle half of the last century, until the “cognitive revolution” rediscovered thinking as an important element of human behavior. Behaviorism and operant conditioning describe you, accurately, as a machine that is programmable by means of reward and punishment, which is how personal buttons are manufactured. But, ironically, your programming also includes the possibility of rational thinking and decision making, by means of which you can customize and transcend your factory settings. In addition to your various buttons, you have probably learned to think for yourself to some extent, and to take a certain class of decisions and actions on that basis. Even your original factory buttons can be disabled or modified without undue fuss *once you have chosen to do that radical thing*. There are button factories and service stations everywhere, not only in your family, and your personal buttons can be reconditioned and repurposed throughout your lifetime. It is better when your programming is voluntary and intentional. Trust me. Call me.

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