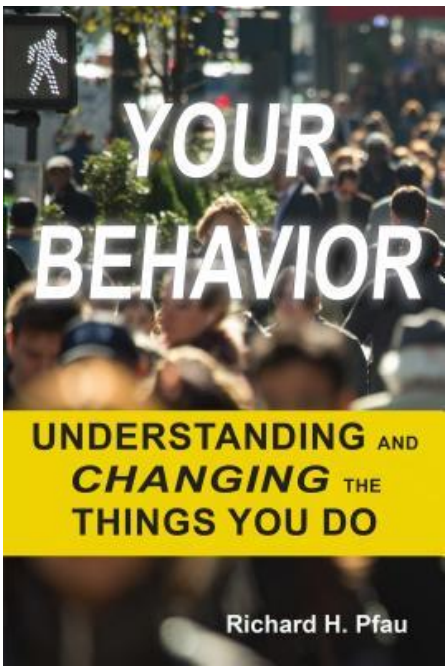

Your Behavior: Understanding and Changing the Things You Do

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This book will help you to: (1) analyze your own behavior based on a comprehensive understanding of why you do the things you do, (2) change your behavior if you want to, and (3) better understand why others behave as they do. Based on an approach that will take you beyond the outdated thinking that dominates psychology today, Dr. Pfau unveils informative secrets about human behavior, including the techniques that others use to influence what you do, how automatically and routinely you behave in most situations, and why. Our body's structure and organization affect what we do and help us to survive. Learn how our body and the environment around us interact to affect what we perceive and how we behave. Knowing this will put you at the cutting-edge of science and human behavior and allow you to understand your behavior and change it.

Your Behavior: Understanding and Changing the Things You Do Details

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From Reader Review Your Behavior: Understanding and Changing the Things You Do for online ebook

John Kirkland says

One seldom comes across a well-crafted, informative book which spans the gamut of understanding human behaviour. Overall there is a crafted design, and each chapter follows an easily-accessible array of enticing ideas formatted from The Big Picture to particulars via boxed Highlights for the speed reader as well as subsequent chapter previews, guide to further reading and endnotes. Like any curation Dr Pfau has presented an apposite selection of relevant material aimed at his primary objective; giving readers access to recent developments for understanding human behaviour. This book is not only and excellent read, it is a springboard for diving into Perceptual Control Theory and its varied applications. I gasp at the author's grasp of salient knowledge presented in an engaging, readable style. Yes, a good read; read it!

Fred Good says

In this book (Your Behavior: Understanding and Changing the Things You Do), science educator Richard Pfau, introduces the layperson to what a significant number of scientists worldwide now consider to be the most important development in the life sciences since "The Principles of Psychology" appeared in 1890. This development is Perceptual Control Theory (PCT), a theory that explains how living organisms operate. What is especially valuable about Pfau's presentation is that it introduces the reader to the topic in a way that is easily accessible, moving from what seems self-evident to what requires more analysis and thought. Each chapter builds on what has previously been covered, providing context and background using references from a broad range of academic disciplines and scientific thought. Rather than assuming that the reader is versed in terms and methods familiar to scientists, Pfau provides highlights throughout each chapter that clarify definitions, offer examples and emphasize key concepts. Each chapter is followed by a comprehensive list of "further reading" and "endnotes."

In the final two chapters Pfau discusses how a person can analyze their own behavior. He reviews the many resources and programs available to anyone who seeks to change whatever aspect of their behavior they want to change. Included are a multitude of support groups, some of them operating worldwide and some on-line resources readily available to anyone. He also suggests how one might go about finding professional help when needed. What is particularly encouraging is that he acknowledges that we all have aspects of our own behavior with which we may not be entirely comfortable and for which we may want help. His approach to the subject is non-judgmental and affirming, supporting the notion that none of us are perfect. This section is in itself an excellent compendium of available resources, including brief descriptions of how they can be accessed.

Pfau's early research interest was focused on trying to develop and articulate a unifying theory of psychology. After reading a book by the late William T. Powers titled "Behavior: the Control of Perception" (1973), he realized that he had found what he was looking for and set about studying PCT. He also began to attend annual meetings of the Control Systems Group, a scientifically oriented organization formed in 1986 by Powers and his wife Mary. Over the course of the next 27 years, scientists in fields as wide ranging as mathematics, physics, education and neurosciences presented and debated research papers they prepared based on Powers' thesis. The CSGnet list serve to which he refers was initiated at the same time and continues today as an active forum for discussion and debate around the theory and its implications.

Until his death in 2013, Bill Powers continued to focus on research using computer simulations to

demonstrate his model. These computer simulations are included on discs, which come with his last book, "Living Control Systems III" (2008). More than a dozen scholars in a variety of disciplines have written books and articles about PCT in peer-reviewed scientific journals. Applications of the model in psychotherapy known as the Method of Levels (MOL) is currently being implemented and studied in England, Australia, and the United States with very encouraging results. Some applications in K-12 schools have also been introduced in the United States, Canada and Australia. In 2015, Northwestern University in Evanston, IL, acknowledged Powers' importance, accepting into its archives the voluminous personal records of his research including physical models, video recordings of the annual meetings of the Control Systems Group and books and research papers by him and other scholars interested in the model.

Theories in science, depending on their scope and potential for replacing previously held assumptions, can take a long time before they come into public awareness, deemed important enough to be seriously considered and evaluated, and eventually accepted as valid. As Thomas Kuhn discussed in his book, "The Structure of Scientific Revolutions" (1967), paradigm shifts in science are not everyday occurrences. The bigger the implications of a theory, the longer it takes for it to become accepted and its potential applications put to the test in what we typically refer to as "the real world." As Pfau explains, Perceptual Control Theory (PCT) meets the criteria of what is referred to as a "good theory" in science. It offers a comprehensive and internally coherent view of what we casually refer to as "behavior".

Pfau has approached the subject in a holistic, disciplined and objective manner, seeking to explain the theory and its underlying research in terms that are accessible to the ordinary reader who may not have a scientific background. He accomplishes this in a manner that is seamless, sequential and well documented. He begins with descriptions of life that are clear to any reader such as a two-page overview entitled "The Story of Your Life. " He then builds upon this basic foundation, introducing, in this instance, the effects of genes and learning into the "story" gradually preparing the reader for ideas that are specific to PCT such as "reference signals" and "reorganization." He always highlights key points and definitions to which he will refer to as he moves from what seems self-evident to what is more complex and may require some reflection to fully understand.

Pfau is clearly conscious of the innate prejudices with which most of us approach a book that purports to challenge existing notions of behavior. Wisely, he resists the temptation to offer counter arguments or evangelizing. Rather, he sets about explaining in a dispassionate and objective manner how PCT fits into a larger context. He explains how it is the product of advances in systems thinking, cybernetics and the digital revolution. While the subject matter and his references are probably unfamiliar to many of us who can benefit from this book, he does not talk down to his audience. He is a skilled teacher who is aware of the state of our current world. He is affirming in his approach while offering opportunities for deeper study and investigation.

In spite of the increasingly serious attention PCT is now receiving from scientists worldwide, there are some reasons the model has taken some time to see the light of day. Pfau's book goes a long way to connect the dots in this regard. Most of what has been written around PCT has been written by and for the academic community. While there have been some books devoted to describing applications in psychotherapy and education, lack of funding for evidence based studies of these applications has been very limited in the United States and are only beginning to be realized in England and Australia. Part of the problem, of course, is that the model seriously challenges the path psychology took early on in the United States as behaviorism dominated the field throughout most of the twentieth century. Education policy in the United States has generally tended to support practices that are inconsistent with developing critical thinking skills, respect for scientific inquiry and a skepticism of dogma. PCT returns the field to what William James initially suggested should be its primary focus, namely, the study of purpose.

Pfau's objective is clear from the start. Rather than seeking to persuade, he seeks to educate. Instead of zeroing in on the specifics of the model and its parts, he starts by providing a context that is familiar and

comfortable to the reader, constantly defining words that may be unfamiliar to the non-scientist and explaining clearly the methods and role of science in coming to grips with observed phenomena, whether such phenomena are apparent to the casual observer or embedded in the complexity that is, in fact, the nature of life and our relationship to the world outside of ourselves, which, it might be noted, includes other humans such as ourselves. Rather than focusing on where others may have gone wrong in their attempts at understanding life, Pfau consistently and subtlety reminds us that science and scholarship are part of a learning process and that it is important not to make judgments about the work of others without offering thoughtful and measured alternatives. In the case of PCT, the whole is, indeed, greater than the parts. The parts are, as it were, a composite of all the efforts, scientific, scholarly and experimental over time that have contributed to our current understanding, evaluation and acceptance of such a big theory as is Perceptual Control Theory. Pfau offers copious amounts of references throughout the text, with specific information about how to access the information and how that information relates to what he is discussing at that point in the text.

Anyone interested in gaining a better understanding of why and how we do what we do, improving their ability to deal with their own internal conflicts and/or improving their relationships with others can benefit enormously from reading this book. With humility and an open mind, Pfau has made an important contribution to introducing Perceptual Control Theory to the lay public. He is an educator in the true sense of the word.
