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Intention versus Context in Consumer Psychology

Within the framework of the growth of knowledge in consumer psychology, the paper examines the contention that cognitive psychology and radical behaviourism yield equivalent accounts of decision making and problem solving. It does this by contrasting a framework of cognitive interpretation, Dennett’s intentional stance, with a corresponding interpretive stance derived from contextualism which partly reflects, partly transcends radical behaviourism. The paper examines the nature of radical behaviourist interpretation, comments on the lack of a consensual method of constructing such interpretations among radical behaviourists, and shows how Dennett generates an interpretation of intentional systems. A corresponding interpretive position can be based initially on a radical behaviourist view of human behaviour and its determinants but, as an interpretive stance rather than a description of empirical science, it finally transcends radical behaviourism. This ‘contextual stance’ is ontologically distinct from the intentional stance. The implications of adopting the contextual stance in consumer psychology are considered.

‘Uniformity of opinion may be fitting for a church, for the frightened or greedy victims of some (ancient, or modern) myth, or for the weak and willing followers of some tyrant. Variety of opinion is necessary for objective knowledge. And a method that encourages variety is also the only method that is compatible with a humanitarian outlook.’ (Feyerabend 1975: 46; emphasis in original).

Introduction

The downside of the philosophical renaissance which has in part characterised consumer research since the early 1980s is this. Although the articulated aim of many philosophically inclined researchers has been towards the unlimited proliferation of theoretical and methodological viewpoints, the boundless propagation of ontologies and epistemologies, the actual range of perspectives produced has been constrained in ways that are predictable as well as indefensible. The interpretive turn in consumer research, welcome in itself, has excluded as much as it has included.

Yet the essence of intellectual progress in social science is theoretical competition, what Feyerabend (1975) calls the active interplay of alternative explanations. There is, moreover a fundamental division in social science that actually promotes the creative clash of opposed ideas and explanations. Social

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scientists have unfortunately taken up one explanatory perspective at a time temporarily ignoring its complement which is the essential component in understanding the favoured viewpoint and its implications. The physics-envy to which psychologists are particularly prone has led them to interpret the behaviourism-to-cognitivism progression as an irreversible paradigm shift. My argument in a nutshell is that the more cognitive we become, the more we should seek to appreciate and incorporate noncognitive explanations such as those offered by behaviourism. And vice versa.

Both the still-dominant cognitive consumer research and the interpretivist, hermeneutical and postmodern movements which have made a more recent impact on our discipline derive from the notion that the intentionality of the individual consumer is a vital clue to her behaviour. The consumer is assumed to act because she 'wants' to, because she has a 'positive attitude' towards the selected brand, or because her action reflects some premeditated intention. The causes or bases of consumer behaviour are thus to be found within the person and consumer behaviour is most effectively predicted, explained or understood by reference to the mental constructs and processes that underlay it. Cognitive consumer research and its descendants are much more sophisticated than this in practice, but inspection of many textbooks and treatises on 'alternative consumer research' confirms that some form of cognitive-folk psychology is the underlying device by which consumer behaviour is generally interpreted.¹

Folk psychology of this kind undoubtedly provides a basis of our social intercourse, our capacity to predict and react appropriately to the behaviour of ourselves and others. But exclusive concentration on cognitive-folk psychology neglects the alternative contextual-folk psychology on which a great deal of our daily social lives equally depends. We as often base our interpersonal relationships on an understanding of what we and others stand to gain or lose by acting in a particular way, of the rewards and sanctions a given course of action will involve. We attribute motivating forces to the actions of others that are independent of their wants, beliefs, desires and intentions as when we judge that a celebrity is advocating universal use of a brand of aftershave or antifreeze not because he holds personally to that position but because he is being paid to espouse it.

When we encounter social difficulties it is often because these two folk psychologies clash, because we have mutually contradictory expectations of how things will turn out. We want to give our children what they desire but we know that overindulgence will make them fat. We do not want to give in to another cigarette but the consequences of doing so have always been so uplifting. We want to keep the commandments but the pay-off is remote. I argue that in scientific research as much as in everyday life, the critical juxtaposing of these alternative viewpoints is central to a more subtle understanding of both the behaviour in question and the nature and implications of the explanations they offer.

¹So engrained is cognitive-folk psychology not only in consumer research but throughout social science that it is simply known as 'folk psychology'. For an introductory analysis, see inter alia Rosenberg (1988) or Bechtel (1988).
Interpretive Pluralism

A complete view of consumer behaviour cannot be achieved by the adoption of just one paradigm; nor by the attempted production of some vast synthesis of available viewpoints, nor yet by the accumulation of empirical research results which will eventually learn to speak for themselves. It can be more closely approached by means of methodological pluralism, the intermingling of viewpoints which are tenaciously-held by individuals within the scholarly community but prevented from becoming restrictively dominant by the proliferation of alternatives.

For a time, the promise of methodological pluralism seemed to offer consumer research an exciting way forward based on the reciprocal criticism of strongly held positions. But the Feyerabendian expectation of a critical interplay of competing explanations, fostering the production of counter-hypotheses and the generation of novel data, has by and large not come to pass. While it became fashionable for a while to cite and even quote Feyerabend (1970, 1975) in the consumer research literature, his advocacy of ‘proliferation and tenacity’ seems to have become lost.

One way in which paradigms become lost - or perhaps just conveniently mislaid - is through the assumption that they have been superseded by others. This is of course the essence of Kuhnian revolutions. But even those who do not subscribe to this view of scientific progress manage to overlook some paradigms while welcoming others. No matter how much it is stressed by leaders in postmodernist and critical relativist thought that our age is characterised above all by a lack of definitive knowledge of anything, many of their followers seem convinced of one thing: they know that certain ways of looking at the world are passé. Another way of restricting the scope of the paradigms with which investigators have to deal lies in the claim that one intellectual perspective is equivalent to, coterminal with, or reduces to another.

The whole point of critical pluralism is to examine one theory from the standpoint of another; theories are inevitably damaged in this process, but it is rare for them to disappear entirely. The usefulness of the approach lies in the generation of counter hypotheses to explain available data, in the need to modify accepted theories on the basis of logical and empirical argument, and in the generation of novel empirical findings that would not have been obtained within the confines of a single perspective (Feyerabend, 1975). The process relies on excluding nothing from the critical debate. This article adopts cognitive psychology and radical behaviourism, as paradigms within which theories of consumer behaviour have been developed, and argues for their retention in consumer psychology as vehicles whose active critical interplay is essential to the growth of knowledge in our discipline.

The interesting thing about radical behaviourism is the claim that it has

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2Paradigm’ is used in this paper in a non-Kuhnian sense as a general statement of all the variables expected to influence one another and their permitted range of (inter)relationships, and the methods by which they may be legitimately investigated and explained.
been superseded by cognitive science, that because radical behaviourism could not handle mental phenomena such as prebehavioural thinking, reasoning and evaluation, it has justifiably been removed from consideration by an intellectual approach capable of doing so. Paradoxically, a great deal of theoretical and empirical research in radical behaviourism is preoccupied with the very phenomena which cognitivism has made its own: there is a well developed operant account of these events and processes, albeit within a different ontological and epistemological framework of analysis. This should be the ideal starting point for debate of the kind envisaged by philosophers of science who have seen critical pluralism as vital to the growth of knowledge. Ironically, the very success of radical behaviourism in the area of cognitive phenomena has led to the charge that it has made it equivalent to cognitive psychology. The paper argues that failure to retain the distinctiveness of each is first indefensible and secondly inimical to scientific progress in consumer psychology.

Overskied (1995) claims that radical behaviourist and cognitive accounts of thinking and reasoning, decision making and problem solving, show convergence and potential equivalence. Radical behaviourism embraces apparently intrapersonal verbal behaviour such as thinking as proximally causative of overt responding (Skinner, 1969, 1988) while cognitivism relies upon an objective analysis of observable behaviour in its formulation of mental structures and processes (Overskied, 1995; cf. Kleinginna and Kleinginna, 1988). The postulation of internal cognitive or verbal events as causative antecedents of visible behaviour is common to both systems of explanation: as a result, ‘it seems fair to say that no fundamental difference, only different terminology, and prejudice, no doubt, stands between the unity of behaviourism and cognitive psychology’ (Overskied, 1995: 521).

Why should this be of interest to consumer psychology? The debate has implications for the general paradigm employed in consumer research, the kinds of relationships to be empirically investigated, and the ontological assumptions which underlie both theory and empirical research. If Overskied is correct, if radical behaviourism and cognitive psychology have become equivalent, then consumer research would benefit from an amalgamation of these frameworks of conceptualisation and analysis. The resulting synthesis would approximate Bandura's (1986) model of human behaviour based on the triadic reciprocity of person, P, environment, E, and behaviour, B. Such a synthesis would not favour either radical behaviourism or cognitive psychology, each of which Bandura characterises as leading to a one-sided determinism, but would seek to integrate them. While acknowledging that both environmental and intrapersonal factors influence behaviour, the emphasis would be on fusing cognitive and environmental viewpoints. If, however, Overskied’s view is not substantiated by further analysis the ways in which radical behaviourist and cognitivist frameworks are utilised in consumer research may be rather different, contributing in other ways to the growth of knowledge.

\(^3\)Cf. Thompson (1994: 262): ‘…all the discoveries leading to modern cognitive psychology were based on careful measures of behaviour, often of response latencies’.
I argue that radical behaviourist and cognitive elements of human behaviour remain incommensurable in as much as they emanate from research communities that embrace distinct ontologies by which internal verbal/cognitive events are attributed to alternative causal origins. Given that these communities consist of rational scholars committed to a scientific epistemology and methodology, the endurance of their disparate cognitive/verbal relevance structures indicates incompatible paradigms. Moreover, cognitive psychology belongs to an interpretive position, the tenets of which can be expressed in the language of philosophical intentionality. This ‘intentional stance’ (Dennett, 1983) stands in contrast to the ‘contextual stance’ to which radical behaviourism belongs, the tenets of which do not invoke intentionality. While these stances are reconcilable at an abstract, nonempirical level, those of their elements which respectively comprise scientific cognitivism and behaviourism are ontologically distinct. To speak of the unity of radical behaviourism and cognitivism is consequently premature.  

To speak of ‘cognitive psychology’ as though it were a unified field invites confusion. The paper therefore employs the generalized approach to folk-cognitive prediction advanced by Dennett (1983), the ‘intentional stance’, to represent the various cognitivism as philosophically intentional explicators of behaviour. The intentional stance is not coterminous with the information processing psychology which Overskied assumes, though it embraces this cognitive paradigm. Beyond information processing at a point where the individual acts apparently autonomously, the intentional stance also embraces existential cognitivism. Similarly, radical behaviourists differ in how far they adopt private events in the interpretation of observed behaviour, how far they confine their accounts of complex behaviour within the scope of experimental science or are willing to speculate about the influence of covert actions. The paper develops an alternative predictive framework, the ‘contextual stance’, to ensconce the non-intentional view that behaviour is a function of its environment. The point comes, again, where users of the contextual stance must permit the individual cognitive freedom, apparent autonomy since internal events that are responsible for overt behaviour are empirically unavailable, rendering the person’s behaviour unpredictable. The contextual stance also includes this post-radical behaviourist ontological range.

Radical behaviourism and cognitive psychology are incommensurable over the range of comparison to which Overskied refers: that applicable to thought processes which are amenable to public scientific investigation or observation by the individual undertaking them. Both the intentional and the contextual stances rely upon a realm of causation which is not available in this way. The intentional stance, represented over this range by information processing approaches, cannot account fully for human thought and action by reference to

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4While Dennett develops the intentional stance, somewhat arbitrarily, in terms of the inferred behaviour of vervet monkeys - arbitrary, given that almost any vertebrate member of the animal kingdom would do - I have developed the contextual stance on the basis of the well researched behaviour of human consumers.
observable entities and/or unobservables linked to intervening variables. It needs a hypothetical level of analysis and implied causation, an act of faith: ‘Tom is now originating reasons to behave which are not related in an observable way to his prior experience’. The same is true of a contextual stance: the point at which radical behaviourism can do no more invites the realisation that consumer decision making involves rule-formulation at a nonempirical level: ‘C is now determining her own reasons to buy P which cannot be related (by her or an external observer) to her reinforcement history’. The two systems are compatible at this nonscientific range of behaviour/experience where neither can predict human behaviour (Garrett, 1996), commensurable simply because the limits of the ontologies of the scientific components of each have been exceeded.

**Radical Behaviourist Interpretation**

Radical behaviourism is an amalgam of positivism, descriptivism, operationism and pragmatism directed towards the prediction and control of behaviour (Chiesa, 1994; Zuriff, 1985). It seeks to explain its subject matter, observed behaviour, by relating operant responses to the environmental conditions which have selected and preserved them. Internal events, states and processes, whether mental, neural or hypothetical, even if real, are not usually admitted as causes of behaviour, though later Skinnerian thought considered them proximal or ‘non-initiating’ causes thereof (Skinner, 1988; cf. Burton, 1984). The ultimate causes of behaviour nevertheless reside always in the environment.\(^5\)

Radical behaviourism does not deny the existence of ‘private events’ such as thoughts and feelings - indeed, its essential distinction from methodological behaviourism inheres in its acceptance of such events as part of its subject matter - but any proximal control exercised by these covert entities over overt behaviour will endure only in so far as it is consistent with the environmental consequences of the overt responding. This is consistent with empirical findings on instructed behaviour (Catania et al. 1990; Horne and Lowe, 1993).

Since Skinner’s preference was always for radical over methodological behaviourism (Skinner, 1979), his system has since its inception required a dual approach to accounting for human behaviour. This duality has become sharper with the passage of time and the extension of radical behaviourist explication from simple animal behaviour in the operant chamber (‘Skinner box’) to the complexities of human social, economic, political, verbal and cultural practices. The *experimental analysis of behaviour* entails relating simple responses in closely regulated laboratory settings to the environmental events (discriminative, reinforcing and punishing stimuli) that control them. The success criterion of this inductive behaviour science is pragmatic rather than realist (Mackenzie, 1987). This stance derives essentially from the brand of positivism on which it is

\(^5\)Despite Skinner’s (1974) view. that a part of the environment is enclosed within the skin and that the skin is an arbitrary barrier, here he appears to be thinking of an extra-personal environment. An alternative view is that the relevant environment is that of the behaviour rather than the organism.
based - not the logical positivism of the Vienna Circle but Machian positivism
founded upon biological expediency (Smith, 1986). In this philosophy of science,
to describe is to explain in detail. Science is thus part of the human species'
effort to adapt to its environment through predicting and controlling nature.
Whatever 'works' in this sense is 'true'; in Skinner's terms, whatever reinforces
behaviour that ensures the survival of effective cultural norms is 'right'. Science
is not, therefore, neutral: the operant chamber leads inexorably to *Walden Two*
(Skinner, 1948) and the design of cultures (Skinner, 1971). The dimensions of
science, the operational rigour of its conceptual definitions, the pragmatic
outcomes of its programme to predict and control are more than Enlightenment
ideals: they are the means to the good life.

Though the link may be inexorable, it is not direct. Beyond the confines of
the operant laboratory, radical behaviourism's accounts of complexity, notably
human behaviour, consist in *interpretation*, 'an orderly arrangement of
behaviour derived from an experimental analysis of a more rigorous sort'
(Skinner, 1957: 11). Principles of behaviour gained from the observation of
responses in laboratory contests can be applied to complex behaviours that are
not amenable to an experimental analysis in the same way that astrophysicists
interpret inaccessible solar events by reference to physical knowledge derived
from a more feasible analysis. The success criterion of such behavioural
interpretations is their 'plausibility'.

Radical behaviourists have done little to formulate a *method* of interpretation,
though this has not inhibited the proliferation of radical behaviourist
While the essential feature of such interpretations is clear - the identification of
discriminative antecedents to responses and their relationship of both to the
reinforcing and punishing consequences of behaving - no systematic procedure
has been evolved which leads plausibly to the unambiguous discernment of
these elements of the 'three-term-contingency'. Issues of validity and reliability
scarcely arise in so deterministic a system. This neglect gives rise to the
criticism that radical behaviourist interpretation consists largely in the 'vague
analogical guesses' attributed by Chomsky (1959) to Skinner's operant account
of verbal behaviour (Skinner, 1957).6

Interpretation consists in the adoption and application of an analogic stance
by which complex behaviour, the causes of which are inaccessible to
experimental science, is described in terms provided by a causal system which
has achieved plausibility when rigorously applied to a simpler behaviour system

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6The absence of criteria by which to pursue plausible interpretations leads to
dogmatic assertion that environmental element x is or is not an operant
response, a discriminative stimulus, or a reinforcer/punisher. This is apparent
even to some radical behaviourists, those who refuse to entertain the view that
private events, which are not amenable to an experimental analysis, are
deserving of their scientific acknowledgement. Further, the radical behaviourist
principle that discriminative stimulus, operant response and reinforcer are
separate events comes under criticism from those who see a single event as
capable of constituting all three (Bandura, 1986).
The rationale for the adoption of such a stance, for its continued application to the complexity in question, must be externally derived. In the case of radical behaviourist interpretation, our success criterion must be initially that of prediction and control imposed by the experimental science on which it is based. 'Understanding', 'explanation', the provision of an 'operant account' are far too vague for a rigorous test.

**The Intentional Stance**

The exemplar of this approach is Dennett's (1983) intentional stance, the attribution of prebehavioural mental events to human and non-human animals in order to predict their behaviour. Dennett claims that ascribing beliefs, attitudes and other mentalistic thought processes to individuals is a legitimate scientific endeavour as long as it results in more accurate predictions of overt behaviour than would otherwise be possible. The intentionality of which he speaks is that of the philosopher and merely indicates that these processes are 'about' something. The intentional stance may thus facilitate a richer understanding of behaviour since it is possible to speculate what the individual is thinking about and, in the case of more than one person, to conjecture the inter-personal cognitive contingencies made possible by people's thinking about each other thinking about each other (Dennett, 1987: 239-40).

The attribution of intentionality to organisms other than oneself assumes that they are rational and that their behaviour can be explained on some level in terms of what their mental processing is *about* (Dennett 1987: 240-2). Dennett proposes several orders of intentional system, applied in his illustration, to the behaviour of vervet monkeys. The assumption having been made that the behaviour of the vervet can be better understood/predicted by attributing to it prebehavioural beliefs, desires and other mentalistic constructs, the question is which of these notions should be attributed? Given that the animal is assumed rational, the following hierarchy can be employed.

*First order intention* simply incorporates beliefs, desires etc.: 'x believes that p'. If, however, p itself contains an intentional idiom, i.e., beliefs about beliefs, the elaboration of the intentional system is increased: 'x wants y to believe that x is hungry' is a *second order* intentional system. And so on: in principle humans could presumably cope with a level of sophistication approaching infinity, but reaching beyond a handful of levels is probably impracticable (Dennett 1987: 243). The question of how many levels the vervet can cope with is one that Dennett as a philosopher finds time for, but the real question is how far ethologists wish to take the intentional stance in explaining/predicting the animal's observed behaviour.

What is more interesting to us is that Dennett contrasts these levels of intentionality with *zero order*: 'the killjoy bottom of the barrel: an account that attributes no mentality, no intelligence, no communication, no intentionality at all to the vervet' (Dennett 1987: 246). Dennett's strategy is to argue against the anti-adaptionism of evolutionary biologists such as Lewontin and Gould, but in the process he mentions the place occupied by behaviourism in the classification of explanations shown in panel A of Table 1.
### Table 1. Levels of Descriptive and Post-Descriptive Explication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A. COGNITIVE ETHOLOGY</th>
<th>B. OPERANT BEHAVIOURISM</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fourth order intentionality</strong>: ‘Tom wants Sam to recognize that Tom wants Sam to believe that there is a leopard’ (245)</td>
<td><strong>Rule-governed behaviour III</strong>: ‘Automatic’ self-rule following in initiating behaviour setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Third order intentionality</strong>: ‘x wants y to believe that x believes he is alone’ (243)</td>
<td><strong>Rule-governed behaviour II</strong>: Self-rule formulation in conscious choice to construct a learning history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Second order intentionality</strong>: ‘has beliefs and desires and beliefs and desires about beliefs and desires’ (243) ‘Tom wants Sam to believe there is a leopard’ (245)</td>
<td><strong>Rule-governed behaviour I</strong>: Other-rule following (contingent on the verbal behaviour of a speaker and a history of rule-following)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>First order intentionality</strong>: ‘has beliefs and desires but no beliefs and desires about beliefs and desires’ (243) ‘Tom wants to cause Sam to run into the trees’ (246)</td>
<td><strong>Contingency-shaped behaviour</strong>: (relation of behaviour to contingent consequences that influence its rate/other aspect of its shape)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Zero order</strong>: ‘the killjoy bottom of the barrel: an account that attributes no mentality, no intelligence, no communication, no intentionality at all to the [individual]’ (246) ‘Tom (like other vervet monkeys) is prone to three flavors of anxiety or arousal: leopard anxiety, eagle anxiety, and snake anxiety’ (ibid.)</td>
<td><strong>Description</strong>: Individual or aggregate patterns of buyer behaviour. Describes behaviour in the absence of any context; consumer behaviour is decontextualised (not just ‘placeless’ but lacking any systematic relationship with its context).</td>
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The intentional stance performs a ubiquitous role in consumer psychology as the current social cognitive approaches to consumer decision processes attest. (For reviews, see Kardes 1994; Foxall 1997a, 1997c).7 Some examples are summarised in Exhibit 1.

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7Recall that it is philosophical rather than psychological intentionality with circumstances which we are concerned.
Exhibit 1. The Intentional Stance in Consumer Psychology

1. Fazio's MODE model. Fazio (1990) points to two ways in which attitudes guide behaviour - spontaneously and through deliberation - and argues that one or other of these processing modes will be activated according to the circumstances of motivation and opportunity present. Deliberative processing is probable when the expected costliness of the prospective behaviour induces rational evaluation of the merits and demerits of assuming a given course of action. At this time, motivation to avoid the expense of making and acting upon a poor judgement overrides the spontaneous mechanism whereby attitudes might be activated from memory without cognitive effort. Assuming that an opportunity to deliberate is available, the individual can be expected to engage in extensive prebehavioural mental deliberation.

Where the motivation to avoid heavy costs misjudgement is low and/or an opportunity to deliberate is not forthcoming, attitudinal influences on behaviour will occur via spontaneous processing. The extent to which attitude influences behaviour in these circumstances reflects the strength of evaluative association that has been built with respect to the attitude object through direct experience or by means of verbal rehearsal of the attitude. Provided that this association is sufficiently strong, the individual's definition of the event will be wholly or predominantly attitude-determined. When the attitude association is weak, however, this definition of the event will be based mainly on non-attitudinal factors: behaviour towards the attitude object will then depend predominantly on the salient features of the attitude object itself and the situation (Fazio 1990: 93–4).

2. The heuristic-systematic model. A broadly similar spectrum underlies Chaiken's (1980) heuristic-systematic model (HSM) which arrays processing strategies on the basis of the amount of cognitive effort they involve. The extremes of the processing continuum she proposes are systematic processing which is potentially effortful, requiring the evaluation of multiple interpretations of the situation before a definitive impression is formulated, and heuristic processing which requires minimal information handling, relying on established rules to make sense of the current situation.

On the understanding that individuals minimize effortful activity, systematic processing is likely only when the person is highly motivated and has the cognitive capacity and resources to engage in it. Nevertheless, individuals are also assumed to balance effort minimization with the confidence they feel in their social perceptions. When heuristics based on experience can be substituted for systematic processing, they will be activated by elements of the current situation that signify their relevance (Bohner, Moskowitz and Chaiken, 1995).

Decision making may, however, result from the simultaneous activation of both processes, reflecting both 'content-related thinking (systematic) and 'cue-related evaluations' (heuristic) (van Knippenberg, Lossie and Wilke, 1994). Recent reviews of the empirical work prompted by the HSM can be found in Eagly and Chaiken (1993): in addition, Bohner, Moskowitz and Chaiken (1995)
present the most recent version of the model and review research which has applied the model in the spheres of mood, persuasion and minority influence.

3. Elaboration-likelihood. Petty and Cacioppo (1986a, 1986b; see also Petty et al. 1991, 1994) are concerned to understand under what individuals yield to a persuasive message such as an advertising appeal. They posit two routes to persuasion, the central and the peripheral, which differ in the extent to which context and personality influence the probability that the individual will elaborate the message by means of conscious information processing. When such elaboration likelihood is high, the central route is brought into play: when it is low, the peripheral.

Central route processing is all effortful endeavour to uncover any worth in the message. It requires mental exertion in which previous experience is examined along with relevant knowledge in the process of evaluating the usefulness and validity of the message. This is an active procedure in which the information provided by the would-be persuader is carefully inspected. As a result of this active information processing, the individual forms an attitude that is both clear and supported by evidence.

By contrast, the peripheral route to persuasion recognises the limitations of human cognitive capacity, the impossibility of devoting substantial mental effort to the evaluation of all messages. It leads to attitude change that is far from being based on extensive thinking about the claims made about the attitude object. The individual does not allocate costly resources of time and cognitive effort to evaluating the claims of the message but employs accumulated knowledge of the rewards, punishments and affective responses that have followed previous experience with the attitude object. Classical and operant conditioning may provide such rapid appraisals of the object which are expressed in terms of inferences drawn from self-observation (as in Bem’s 1972 example: ‘I must like brown bread: I’m always eating it’) or heuristics grounded in abundant practice (‘You get what you pay for’) or stereotyped reactions (‘He’s a Manchester United supporter: I’ll steer clear of him’).

Why proceed beyond the zero-order level? An entirely descriptive psychology would presumably devote itself to providing reports of observed behaviour, unelaborated by unobservables invented for the purpose of giving a more anthropomorphic account. Dennett’s answer implies that the search for a more elaborate interpretation is motivated by a desire for enhanced predictiveness:

‘Lloyd Morgan’s canon of parsimony enjoins us to settle on the most killjoy, least romantic hypothesis that will account systematically for the observed and observable behavior, and for a long time the behaviorist creed that the curves could be made to fit the data well at the lowest level prevented the exploration of the case that can be made for higher-order, higher-level systematizations of the behavior of such animals. The claim that in principle a lowest-order story can always be told of any animal behavior (an entirely
physiological story, or even an abstemiously behavioristic story of unimaginable complexity) is no longer interesting. It is like claiming that in principle the concept of food can be ignored by biologists - or the concept of the gene or the cell for that matter - or like claiming that in principle a purely electronic-level story can be told of any computer behavior. Today we are interested in asking what gains in perspicuity, in predictive power, in generalization, might accrue if we adopt a higher-level hypothesis that takes a risky step into intentional characterization (Dennett, 1983: 246-7).

Pace Dennett, the zero-order level of investigation has value in spite of its current unfashionableness. Indeed, in so far as there can be said to be a single philosophy of contemporary social science nowadays, it is staunchly anti-positivistic, denying emphatically that the methods of investigation employed by the natural sciences have any place in the exploration of human behaviour. Some of the most successful work in consumer psychology, for instance, conforms largely to the natural science model. It employs only a minimum of descriptive terms, relies heavily on the establishment of empirical regularities, eschews as far as possible theoretical terms that refer to unobservables, and concentrates on the prediction of aggregate patterns of choice.

For instance, a large part of Ehrenberg's work has entailed finding empirical regularities of consumer choice from which certain laws of marketing may be derived (e.g. Ehrenberg, 1988). The work has been particularly successful in predicting aspects of repeat buying from basic descriptive measures such as brand penetration levels from measures of repeat buying rate. Two empirical generalizations, substantiated for a very wide range of consumer non-durables, may be mentioned by way of example. (i) The proportion of buyers of Brand X in one period who buy it again in a second period is $1.23\bar{w}$ where $\bar{w}$ is the mean number of times these buyers of brand X purchase it in the period. (ii) The consumers who buy brand X in one period but not the next buy it in the period in question with an average frequency of 1.4 units. It does not follow that consumer psychology should be confined to this level of analysis, but it is one which is essential to the sound conduct of more theoretical and interpretive work and without it consumer and marketing research would lack foundation. In particular, the 'facts' established at this level provide a programme for theoretical work and also an essential test of its empirical correspondence (Ehrenberg, 1988). In so far as the growth of knowledge depends upon the critical interplay of competing theories, inspiring counter-hypotheses and the generation of new empirical knowledge (Feyerabend, 1975), this level of analysis is inescapable. It is, however, limited. Higher levels of explanation are vital to understanding why the facts of behaviour described by zero-order accounts are as they are.

The range of such higher-order explanations available to us is, nonetheless, scarcely exhausted by the intentional stance. Dennett is right about the need to go beyond the zero-order level but limits the range of subsequent explanations by adopting a primitive understanding of behaviourism. According to Dennett, behaviourism (he is thinking particularly of Skinner's radical behaviourism) never gets beyond the killjoy level. This is strange because radical behaviourism
has always embraced so-called private events like thoughts and feelings (this is what distinguishes it from the older methodological behaviourism) and the inclusion of private verbal discriminative stimuli as proximal causes of behaviour in the explanatory repertoire of radical behaviourists has steadily increased (though not all have employed it in practice). Moreover, since the distinction between contingency-shaped and rule-governed behaviour was recognised by radical behaviourists (Skinner, 1969), the interpretation of operant behaviour in terms ranging beyond the bottom of the barrel has been well and truly on the behaviourist agenda (though some more conservative experimentalist have not sought to extend their reach in this way).

The Contextual Stance

It is feasible, therefore, to propose a contextual stance for the interpretation of human behaviour: Behaviour is explicable and predictable in so far as it is assumed to be environmentally determined: specifically in so far as it is under the control of a learning history that represents the reinforcing and punishing consequences (rewards and sanctions) of similar behaviour previously enacted in similar environments. This interpretive stance already apparently underlays one variety of contextualist psychology (Hayes et al., 1993; Morris, 1991). While there are several forms of contextualism, some of which may be incommensurable (Hayes, 1993; Morris, 1993), that which characterises behaviour analysis in the radical behaviourist tradition takes ‘behaviour-in-context’ as its unit of analysis i.e. it seeks the meaning of behaviour in its relationship to its context. Such contextualist accounts of behaviour are not restricted to the analysis of single stimuli and single responses but embrace the transactions between a stream of behaviour and systematic relationships to its context through time. The meaning of behaviour is found, therefore, not in the imputed attitude or intention of the actor but in the environmental consequences which the behaviour has characteristically produced. Its meaning inheres in its function, what it does, its success in relation to its goals. Cognition itself is analysed as contextually-bound behaviour.

Panel B of Table I summarises how this interpretive system might work for consumer psychology. There is no implication that the stages of the operant hierarchy exactly match those of cognitive ethology. But levels of explanation ranging well beyond the purely descriptive are entirely feasible in a radical behaviourist framework and - for the record - have empirical justification that goes beyond that which Dennett would expect to adduce for his post-kiljoy levels of analysis.

The zero order level of analysis would be well illustrated by Ehrenberg’s empirical regularities. It is purely descriptive and makes no demands on higher level constructs to explain it. This can be one of its major strengths, of course, given that consumer psychology so infrequently deals with this kind of descriptive analysis. Even from a radical behaviouristic viewpoint however it is incomplete: it fails either to explain consumer choice by relating observed behaviour to the environmental conditions that shape and maintain it, or even to interpret it in these terms. Even a radical behaviourist analysis requires a
first-order level of explanation which achieves this. An operant consumer psychology would need to relate observed individual and aggregate buyer behaviours systematically to the patterns of reinforcement and punishment by which they can be explained and to the discriminative stimuli under whose control they might come.

But such a consumer psychology can go further still. Radical behaviourism has long proceeded beyond the analysis of contingency-shaped behaviour (its first order level) by considering the (causal) role of private stimuli and the rule-governance of most if not all human behaviour (Skinner, 1969). The distinction between behaviour that is contingency-shaped and that which is rule-governed is as follows. Operant behaviour is, by definition, sensitive to its contingent consequences: when it is emitted more frequently, those consequences are said to be reinforcing and, when its rate is diminished, they are called punishing. The rate at which reinforcement is presented (the 'schedule of reinforcement') determines how quickly and resolutely behaviour is learned (Ferster and Skinner, 1957). Behaviour which is acquired directly through such sensitivity to its consequences is known as contingency-shaped behaviour: the behaviour of nonhumans is apparently entirely of this kind. Human behaviour, however, need not be shaped in this way: else learning to drive a car would be so hit-and-miss that few if any would survive to get their licence. The fact that so many people in fact become safe drivers attests to the capacity of human behaviour to be instructed or rule-governed. Despite the uninformed criticisms of behaviourism as a method of explanation confined to contingency-shaping (e.g. Bandura, 1986; Geertz, 1973; cf. Foxall, 1996), radical behaviourists have long incorporated the role of rules as verbal descriptions of contingencies, in their analyses. The ability of this approach to deal with the phenomena of reasoning and thought, which were so long imagined to be the sole province of cognitivists, actually provides the mainspring of current intellectual progress in operant psychology (Hayes, 1989). The overriding character of operant behaviour as contingency-sensitive behaviour remains: though rules may override the contingencies for a time, empirical work shows that the ultimate source of behavioural control lies in the environment. Nevertheless, although in both cases the contingencies themselves have been held to provide ultimate control of human behaviour, the interpretation of complex human behaviour has in fact increasingly relied upon theoretical entities located within the individual.

In contrast to the primitive radical behaviourism cited by Dennett (cf. Dennett, 1995), recent formulations deny that any but the simplest human behaviours can be considered entirely contingency-shaped - tapping one's fingers absentmindedly, for instance (Catania, 1992). The impossibility of operant conditioning occurring in humans without conscious awareness has long been noted (Brewer, 1974), casting doubt on whether the word 'conditioning' is justified or useful. Most if not all human behaviour is influenced by rules that specify setting-response-outcome contingencies which, at the most basic level, arise from the verbal behaviour of others. When the individual lacks a relevant learning history and therefore rules for performing a given behaviour, decision making is required. In the cognitive depictions of this, consumer
behaviour is said to be preceded by 'deliberative processing' or 'systematic processing' or the 'central route to persuasion'. In a radical behaviourist interpretation, such behaviour is governed by 'other-rules' embodying the social pressures that give rise to the 'subjective norms' of multi-attribute models, lacking a learning history, the consumer uses other rules as a surrogate. As the consumer develops experience, a history of reinforcement and punishment prompts the generation of self-rules which take the place of others' formulations of the situation. Finally, the consumer's behaviour is characterised by apparent spontaneity as the discriminative stimuli that compose the behaviour setting evoke self-rule-governed responses. These correspond to the peripheral route to persuasion, the spontaneous processing and the heuristic processing of the cognitive models (Table 2). The higher-levels of operant analysis shown in Table 1 undermine Dennett's insistence that behaviourism cannot handle post-descriptive accounts of human choice.

Table 2. Behavioural and Cognitive Approaches to Decision Making

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contextual stance</th>
<th>Low experience / high cost</th>
<th>High experience / low cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other rules. Consumer's lack of a relevant learning history prompts search for other-rules.</td>
<td>Self-rules. Acquisition of a learning history from which self-rules can be extracted.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Elaboration likelihood (Petty and Cacioppo 1986) | Central route | Peripheral route |
| Heuristic-systematic processing (Chaiken 1980) | Deliberation | Spontaneity |
| Systematic processing | Heuristic processing |

Let us look more closely at the contextual interpretation of consumer behaviour. (For a detailed consideration, see Foxall 1997a, 1997c; see also Exhibit 2). Behaviour analytic consumer research portrays consumer behaviour as the outcome of environmental consequences, acting either directly or through verbal descriptions (rules). Behaviour is contingency-shaped when the person has much experience of the outcomes of this or similar behaviour: When this is not the case, behaviour is usually preceded by a review of the contingencies described by other-rules (instructions provided by other people). In this process, and through direct behavioural experience, the individual forms personal self-rules about how the contingencies operate. As behaviour comes under the control of self-rules, it appears spontaneous and routine, though it has a long history in which it was shaped by successive approximations to what it has become. Most human behaviour is rule-governed to some extent but ultimately the contingencies themselves determine what people actually do. Adherents of this viewpoint interpret prebehavioural deliberation not as mental processing but as a behaviour in its own right in which the consequences of acting are reviewed and evaluated.

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This approach to consumer problem solving is described fully in Foxall (1997c).
Exhibit 2. The Contextual Stance in Consumer Psychology

Consumer decision making as behaviour

How do the mechanisms for decision making and persuasion proposed by Fazio’s MODE model (1990), the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty and Cacioppo, 1984a) and the Heuristic-Systematic Model (Chaiken, 1980) relate to consumer decision making in behavioural perspective? In the BPM interpretation ‘motivation’ is supplied by the individual’s learning history or lack thereof. It is this which determined the likelihood that the outcome of a particular action will be relatively costly or rewarding and which leads to more or less pre-behavioural reviewing of the contingencies, i.e. the probability of particular positive and aversive outcomes emerging from each of the behaviours available.

Such review is not mental processing; it is behaviour, verbal behaviour which is often private. Where deliberation takes place it consists of a review of rules, self-rules generated on the basis of direct learning experience of the contingencies, and other-rules provided by those whose instruction have proved accurate and reinforcing if followed in the past and/or who themselves have relevant experience of the consequences which can be publicly ascertained. Self-rules correspond to the attitude towards the act of the Fishbein/Ajzen formula: how would one identify learning history through self report other than by asking what an individual believed would be the outcome of acting in a given way in specific circumstances and weighting this by that same individual’s appraisal of those consequences? Questions that elicit attitude towards the act may be equally understood as indicating a history of reinforcement.

The rules revealed in this manner (‘Eating fresh greens every day will result in a clear complexion’) are akin to the tracks identified by Zettie and Hayes (1982): they specify how to get to a particular goal point. By this time, behaviour is ‘scripted’ (Langer, 1989a, 1989b), following not from conscious intentions or plans but under the control of self-rules and/or immediate stimuli.

Other-rules correspond to the subjective norm of the Fishbein/Ajzen model: acting as plys, they specify the social consequences of compliance or noncompliance with a deliberation, experience and self-observation, to action based on self-rules is provided by specified course of action. Evidence for the progression from other-rules, via research on the TPB by East (1992, 1997) which was reviewed above. (A comparative review of the cognitive and behaviourist approaches to problem solving is found in Reese, 1994: cf. Chase and Bjamadottir, 1992; Reese, 1992a, 1992b; Ito 1994).

The probability of a particular response depends also upon the nonregulatory components of the consumer behaviour setting, the physical, social and temporal discriminative stimuli given meaning in any particular setting by the individual’s learning history. Where they have figured in the past as controlling antecedents, they will now act to signal the kinds of consequences that are contingent on each possible response. They will thus play an integral role in prebehavioural deliberation, each setting the occasion for behaviour with
Exhibit 2. (Continued)

predictable results in the form of positive and aversive consequences.

When the learning history of the individual is such that known consequences have followed regularly and unimpeded from specific acts, the discriminative stimuli in the current setting will provide signals that quickly result in the performance of the requisite behaviour; when the individual has little appropriate learning history, or the history is ambiguous with respect to the kinds of reinforcer or punisher likely to result from behaviour, the magnitude of these consequence and their probability, greater deliberation including the formulation, weighing and use of rules will be normal.

The self- and other-instructions activated to a greater or less extent in either deliberative or spontaneous processing, plus the power of current discriminative stimuli -conferred in a history of reinforcement and punishment - determine the probability of a specific response. The immediate prebehavioural verbal self-instruction or prediction the individual is capable of making (on the question of introspection entering into rule-formulation, see Moore, 1994: on that of self-editing in rule-formulation, see Hyten and Chase, 1991: cf. Vaughan, 1991) - equivalent to what deliberation theorists call behavioural intention - is another kind of rule, an augmental, the proximal motivating factor leading to the consummation of a particular act.

Behaviour formed through direct experience is contingency-shaped: its persistence is due to continued reinforcement and its emission is likely to come under the stimulus control of the physical, social and temporal elements of the behaviour setting. Such behaviour may be described as 'spontaneous' or 'automatic' - finger tapping, for instance - when it is entirely under the control of these historical and current contingencies (Catania, 1992a). However, it is unlikely that a great deal of human behaviour is formed and maintained entirely through the direct action of the environmental contingencies.

Humans are rule-formulating animals and routine/habitual behaviour is likely to be guided by self-rules, formed through experience and observation, and taking the form largely of tracks. Private tracking probably controls a great deal of repetitive consumer behaviour such as weekly or monthly supermarket shopping. Although such behaviour as brand choice shows 100% loyalty in only a small minority of the users of a product class, most consumers multi-brand purchasing is confined to a small repertoire of tried and tested brands in each class (Ehrenberg and Uncles, 1995). Brand choice within this repertoire may look haphazard but it is far from random. It differs from finger tapping in that it is highly functional and economically/consumption rational, and most consumers have no difficulty in describing the rules employed in finding and selecting brands of fast-moving consumer goods, as protocol analysis readily shows.

Self-rules in the form of tracks are undoubtedly analogous to global attitudes towards the object - in this case a known subset of substitutable brands within a product class - which are easily/automatically elicited by the discriminative stimuli in the purchase setting. Formed through repeated purchasing, observation and imitation, including a long period of consumer socialization, they are readily available to guide immediate, familiar purchasing in the
Exhibit 2. (Continued)

presence of such antecedent controlling stimuli as the label on a can, a familiar brand name or a logo. This resembles the spontaneous processing in the presence of a known attitude object identified by Fazio as prerequisite to unpremeditated, automatic, routine processing.

Behaviour instructed by the rules provided by others is formed through indirect experience: TV advertisements, neighbours' recommendations, parents' approbation, and so on. Such rules are most likely to be effective when the listener's relevant learning history is minimal or non-existent and/or when the behaviour setting in which he or she is acting is closed (the latter a function of how much control the speaker has over the setting). Other-instructions are far more likely to be productive in situations unfamiliar to the listener, when a novel course of action is commended - perhaps buying a radically innovative product or moving house or just trying a new make of computer disc. Such behaviours usually require some degree of deliberation since no self-rules exist to 'spontaneously' guide action. Depending on previous rule-compliance and its outcomes, the consumer will be more or less disposed to follow the other-instructions without demur; a friend whose advice has proved worthwhile may be able to offer recommendations that are immediately taken up and acted upon, providing the new sphere of consumption is not too far removed from that previously instructed. But a stranger appearing in a TV commercial may not be able to rely on audience members' having so motivating a reinforcement history with respect to following other-rules. Other-rules of these kinds take the form of plys in the absence of direct experience on the part of the listener, and especially if the rules come from a remote/unfamiliar/impersonal source, they are more likely to lead to deliberation than immediate action.

The consequent review of the contingencies is interpreted by Skinner (1974) as behavioural, a series of private events in which the ultimate causes of behaviour are scrutinised. Verbal rules towards specific courses of action (like attitudes towards target behaviours in the cognitive theories) may result from this process. The consumer who initially had no self-rules for the proposed course of action (as a result of having little or no direct experience thereof, little or no relevant learning history) eventually may form such rules, translating the plys provided by others into the private tracks necessary to guide particular behaviour in a clearly defined situation (corresponding to that defined in terms of target, action, timing and context by the multi-attribute modellers).

To reach a decision, choosing one action from among several, is to form a behavioural intention in the deliberative models: in the BPM, it appears to involve a third kind of rule, an augmental, which motivates the individual to behave in a specific manner. Augmentals of this kind result from deliberation and are succeeded by positive motivation, perhaps the outcome of a cost-benefit analysis that indicates that the reinforcing consequences of the proposed act are likely to exceed the aversive, a review of the contingencies that suggests one action will generate greater net benefits than any other.

If the action is performed and reinforced, the plys provided as other-rules gradually become track-based self-rules and, ultimately, the contingencies themselves exert a greater share of control than instructions: the behaviour
Exhibit 2. (Continued)

becomes routinised and apparently habitual. Much behaviour is of course a mixture of contingency-shaped and rule-governed, subject to adjustment as new contingencies arise and as new instructions from others and oneself emerge to be evaluated and otherwise deliberated upon. Guerin (1994a: 192) distinguishes two kinds of decision making which have the capacity to bring together the findings of social cognitive research and those of behaviour analysis. ‘Intuitive decision making’, he writes, ‘refers to behaving in accordance with the multiple environmental contingencies acting at that time [while] nonintuitive means that decision behaviour has become verbally governed in some way and verbal rules are controlling the decision behaviour through pliance or tracking’.

The preceding analysis goes beyond this, however, eschewing the simple dichotomy it implies. The theory expounded above assumes that, where there is little direct learning history, behaviour is guided by other-rules (especially, plys): where there is a well-established learning history it is guided by prior contingency shaping and the discriminative stimuli of the current behaviour setting including self-rules (especially, tracks). Between the two is a period of contingency shaping through which the self-rules that come to guide behaviour apparently spontaneously are formulated. At this stage, the nonverbal contingencies that guide current behaviour are notoriously difficult to distinguish from the self-rules that may do so (Hackenberg and Joker, 1994: Hayes, Brownstein, Haas and Greenway, 1986). The choice of explanation is methodologically based: some behaviour analysts refuse to admit variables represented by private events that are not amenable to an experimental analysis of their subject matter (e.g. Hayes, 1986); others are willing to interpret observed behaviour in terms of nonpublicly available entities of this kind (e.g. Catania, 1992a: Horne and Lowe, 1993).

The behavioural perspective model (BPM) proposes that consumer behaviour is a function of the interaction of the scope of the current consumer behaviour setting and the individual’s learning history. This interaction motivates a specific behaviour by prefiguring the utilitarian and informational consequences it is likely to produce. A relatively closed behaviour setting involves mainly other-rules which describe not only the contingencies but the social reinforcements and punishments of compliance or noncompliance. Compliant behaviour in these settings is negatively reinforced while noncompliance is punished.

Relatively open settings involve mainly self-rules. Personal learning history encapsulates an individual’s disposition towards complying with the instructions of others (which is activated by the discriminative stimuli that compose a closed setting) as well as the basis for derivation of self-rules (which are activated by the elements of an open setting). Utilitarian reinforcement consists in the utilitarian benefits of purchase and consumption: the behaviour that produces it is contingency-shaped. Informational reinforcement consists in social standing and the achievement of personal norms: the behaviour that produces it is rule-governed. Self-rules appear to refer to the attitudes formed through deliberation: other-rules, to subjective norms: when self-rules have been employed
frequently, the behaviour appears to come under the automatic stimulus control of the behaviour setting.

At first the consumer has no specific learning history with respect to the consumption behaviour in question. Indeed, by definition, a problem arises only when an individual lacks a learning history relevant to the contingencies with which she is faced. Perhaps presented with a new brand in a new product class, she lacks any accumulated experience or knowledge of buying and using the item and the consequences of doing so. However, in proportion to the consumer's having a learning history for rule-following, she is likely to seek out and act on other-rules. These might take the form of the advertising claims which first apprised her of the innovation: alternatively, they might come from significant others, opinion leaders of her acquaintance. Whatever their source, these rules are not passively accepted by the consumer but used as the basis of a sequence of deliberation and evaluation, first of the claims themselves, and their comparison with similar claims for other products and brands, then of her consumption experience. The consumer's actions involved in the trial and repeat purchase/consumption of the product acquires a learning history. Moreover, reasoning with respect to her experience of the item, and the evaluation of this experience, will lead to the formation of self-rules which henceforth guide action without constant deliberation. In cognitive terms, the consumer has moved from the central route to the peripheral, from deliberation to spontaneity, from systematic reasoning to the application of heuristics. The initial lack of a relevant learning history prompted a search for other-rules; the acquisition of such a history means that self-rules can be extracted from experience.

Thus far, the contextual stance reflects radical behaviourism. However, once we acknowledge the consumer's capacity to make self-rules, her behaviour cannot be predicted (let alone controlled) by an agent who has knowledge of the contingencies of reinforcement in operation. Her capacity to think beyond the contingencies renders the behaviourist programme of predicting and controlling behaviour unfeasible (Garrett, 1996).

There is no need for the contextual stance to become mentalistic at this point, however, though nor can it avoid the possibility that the consumer creatively generates imaginary contingencies, exhibiting a degree of cognitive freedom. The standard radical behaviourist response to this is twofold. First, these imaginings, if real, are caused - and caused by external contingencies. But can this be empirically demonstrated? It would be necessary to demonstrate a one-to-one correspondence in order to do this. In fact, we have no access to the consumer's learning history which would be necessary to make such a demonstration, nor to her imaginings since they are, by definition, covert events. Secondly, the real contingencies will take over control of behaviour once the individual is exposed to them. Again, can this be demonstrated empirically rather than asserted as an act of faith? What are the 'real' contingencies? In the animal laboratory we know that they are. In the real world, the complexity of different environmental impingements on a consumer, the fact that her behaviour is 'multiply determined' even in the behaviourists' terms, that several schedules of reinforcement may have brought her here, etc. makes it impossible
to know what the actual contingencies are with any greater accuracy than we can determine what the imagined contingencies are. Chomsky's review put paid to the idea that the precision available in the laboratory is equally available to the interpretive operant psychologist.

Behaviour analysts have surmised that behaviour is rule-governed only on its initial emission; thereafter, it comes under contingency control. The analysis undertaken here suggests a more elongated process. The import of this analysis lies not in its superficially reiterating the sequence of consumer decision making found in cognitive models of initial and subsequent information processing but, in its capacity to account for these phenomena without extensive reliance on theoretical entities posited at a metabehavioural level.

A system like radical behaviourism which posits prediction and control as the criteria for scientific success fails as a comprehensive explanatory system if it can be shown that its subject matter cannot be predicted. The above argument implies not simply that, given the present state of knowledge and investigative technique, particular behaviours cannot be predicted, but that a certain class of behaviour is inherently unpredictable. Rule-governed behaviour often cannot be predicted: this is so whenever the individual acts upon covert rules which are not based on simple cost-benefit analysis and are not therefore directly amenable to others who are faced solely with the cost-benefit facts (Garrett, 1996; Prelec and Herrnstein, 1991). For example, my behaviour as an overweight person striving to lose pounds may include the avoidance of streets which contain tempting cafes, foodstores and restaurants. At no time am I physically or socially constrained from frequenting such places: this, and my having over-eaten there many times in the past, would lead a third party to predict a recurrence of such activity. But, in so far as my behaviour conforms to a self-derived rule of self-management which leads me to evade such temptations, my behaviour is unpredictable to any other person not made aware of the rule. If I have a generally-known prior history of self-rule breaking, my rule-conformity on this occasion may well be unpredictable to a third party who is informed of my new resolution.

**Strategic Implications**

Does the contextual stance genuinely introduce variety into the range of research paradigms for consumer psychology, or is it merely a more complicated means of saying what the intentional stance already says perfectly adequately? When we try to account for the behaviour of the celebrity who endorses this or that brand of aftershave or antifreeze by alluding to the financial gains he makes by doing so, are we not simply saying that he *wants* money more than he *values* the brand? That is, using the intentional stance even though we seem to be making judgements about context? Both Dennett (1987) and Skinner (1983) see only one interpretive mode here where I claim there are two. Dennett claims that the environmental contingencies on which a radical behaviourist explanation or interpretation are based reduces to the intentional stance: saying that C's purchases of butter is reinforced (by its taste or price or whatever) is tantamount to saying that C *likes* butter. Skinner makes
the reverse claim, to the effect that the attribution of intentionality simply hides
the environmental contingencies that actually control C’s behaviour.

But there is an important difference between the stances, a discontinuity
which inheres in the intentional stance’s assumption of rationality and the
contextual stance’s of contingency. The events which each stance invokes in
order to explain and predict (‘desires’ and ‘beliefs’ in the case of the intentional
strategy: learning history and the discriminative stimuli that form the current
behaviour setting in that of the contextual strategy) belong to entirely different
ontologies, methodologies and epistemologies. The intentional stance is
teleological - given rationality and the right circumstances, the required beliefs
and desires can be ascribed and then invoked as causes of the behaviours in
question. The behaviour of the intentional system is goal-achieving. The
contextual stance, by contrast, rests on an evolutionary mode of explanation,
selection by consequences, which ascribes behaviour to the positive and
negative outcomes of similar prior behaviour in similar prior circumstances. The
behaviour of the contextual system is consequence-producing. Nor does the
contextual stance simply reduce to the intentional: it is not the case that the use
of radical behaviourist explanation masks the intentional stance. That would
only occur if and when goals and reinforcers were identical. Clearly, they are
not: achieving a valued goal is not necessarily reinforcing, and many things that
increase the rate of our behaviour were never our conscious goals.

Consideration of the research strategies that emanate from each of these
stances clarifies further the distinction between them. The use of the intentional
strategy is a deductive process: it proceeds from the a priori ascription of
rationality to the system whose behaviour is to be explained. The procedure is
as follows (Dennett, 1987: 17):

1. Treat the object whose behaviour is to be predicted as a rational agent.
2. Figure out what beliefs that agent should have, given its place in the
   world and its purpose: do the same for its desires;
3. Predict how it will act to further its goals in the light of its beliefs.

The contextual strategy is inductive: it makes no a priori assumption about the
rationality of the system that is to be predicted but assumes that its behaviour is
environmentally determined. The environment is the agent. Its procedure is as
follows:

1. Treat the behaviour to be predicted as environmentally contingent;
2. Figure out the past contingencies that have shaped that behaviour;
3. Predict how present and future contingencies will influence the continuity
   of that behaviour.

Steps 2 and 3 require figuring out the system’s learning history, including the
capacity of its behaviour to be contingency-shaped and rule-governed. Step 3
predicts the susceptibility of future behaviour to rules and contingencies.

Both strategies entail objective, third-person stances. Dennett (1978: 3-4)
states that ‘... a particular thing is an intentional system only in relation to the
strategies of someone who is trying to explain and predict its behavior. A particular thing is a contextual system only in relation to the strategies of someone who is trying to explain and predict its behaviour.

There is no assumption in the intentional stance that the system really has beliefs and desires - only that its behaviour is better predicted if these are ascribed to it. Hence, the decision to adopt the strategy is pragmatic, and is not intrinsically right or wrong (Dennett, 1987: 7). The contextual stance, by contrast, works not by ascribing internal mental operations to a system but by observing external behaviour-environment regularities. The sources of information on these regularities are three-fold:

1. By observation/inference of contingency-shaping;
2. By observation/inference of rules expressed by other persons to the system in question, or articulated by the system in question;
3. By inference from the regularities of behaviour-in-context observed of the system.

These inferences and observations are never of what is going on in the system's mind; nor are they intentional ascriptions. They are observations or inferences of n-term contingencies, illustrated here by the three-term contingency:

\[ S^d \rightarrow R \rightarrow S^{ra} \]

where \( S^d \) is a discriminative stimulus; \( R \) is a response; and \( S^{ra} \) is a reinforcing or aversive stimulus.

The difference between teleology and contingency is further clarified by consideration of the former's assumption of rationality on the part of the agent whose behaviour is to be predicted or explained. Dennett (1978: 6-7) states that an intentional system is rational in that it optimally achieves its designated/ascribed goals. Hence, 'one predicts behavior ... by ascribing to the system the possession of certain information and supposing it to be directed by certain goals, and then working out the most reasonable or appropriate action on the basis of these ascriptions and suppositions' (p6). 'It is a small step to calling the information possessed the computer's beliefs, its goals and subgoals its desires' (ibid.)

The behaviour of a contextual system is contingent upon its prior environmental consequences; it is contingent, not necessarily rational in the sense of optimising (though it may be rationalised in the sense of reasoned out: Lea et al., 1987).

The intentional system is not autonomous - otherwise it would not be predictable. Indeed, Dennett (1987: 49) shows that:

1. 'A system's beliefs are those it ought to have given its perceptual capacities its epistemic needs and its biography'.
2. 'A system's desires are those it ought to have, given its biological needs and the most practicable means of satisfying them. Thus intentional systems desire survival and procreation, and hence desire food, security,
health, sex, wealth, power, influence... .
3. 'A system's behavior will consist of those acts that it would be rational for an agent with those beliefs and desires to perform'.

The use of the intentional stance therefore depends on teleological reasoning by one intentional system about the needs, beliefs, desires, epistemology, biology and circumstances of what it takes to be another such system. This depends on common ground between the systems: the predicting system may generalise from its own needs, beliefs and desires to those of the target system. It may also rely on observation and reasoning. But the key component is the assumption that the target system is rational in the pursuit of its desires. The contextual stance does not rule out rationality but understands it as a special case of contingent behaviour. The focus in the contextual stance is on the actual control of behaviour by its environmental consequences. There is no a priori reason to expect that this will accord with optimisation. Moreover, behavioural science indicates that it actually does not (Herrnstein, 1997).

Implications for Consumer Psychology

Consideration of the contextual stance has complicated the straightforward message of Dennett's intentional stance. We could, however, simplify matters again if we could show that one or other stance is redundant. This might be achieved by demonstrating either (1) reducibility or (2) equivalence, i.e. that (1) stance A is logically or pragmatically eliminated by virtue of stance B's superior capacity to predict behaviour accurately or control it effectively, or on account of the poverty of stance A's explanatory status compared to that of stance B: or (2) while superficially dissimilar, the stances are in fact saying the same thing on the same ontological basis. (1) is seemingly assumed by Dennett since he does not even consider the possibility that any rival stance might better predict the behaviour of an intentional system: behaviourism's zero-order account renders it useless in this regard. (2) is what Overskied claims to be the case.

(7). Yet (1) is patently false on any pragmatic criterion. A thorough consideration of attitude theory and research must conclude that the attribution of intentionality does little if anything to assist the prediction of behaviour in the absence of a strong situational framework. But the preceding discussion of attitudes - intentions - behaviour leads to the conclusion that the mentalistic approach does little if anything to assist prediction. Rather, it severely restricts the domain in which research effort is concentrated to the alleged mental antecedents of behaviour rather than on behaviour itself. This is a criticism which Skinner (e.g. 1974) has strongly made of psychological attributions of causation to an intrapersonal world of mental events. Despite Dennett's somewhat abrasive rejection of this criticism, we have seen that it applies very accurately to the cognitive analysis of consumer behaviour in which even the

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9 Not that Dennett claims that intentional systems are fully rational at all times: but they are 'marvellously rational' (1988: 52). rational enough that is for this to be a reasonable assumption for this stance.
repeated demonstration of the effect of past behaviour on current choice is de-emphasised, given a mentalistic interpretation. When at the least it should receive attention in the form of the major hypothesis that behaviour is predictable mainly from behaviour (Foxall, 1997a). The result of ignoring this is to further the ontological dubiety of the cognitive consumer research programme.\(^\text{10}\)

Dennett's argument that attitudes precede and predict behaviour is based on the flimsiest and most trivial reasoning that would surprise anyone familiar with the theoretical debates and empirical research undertaken in this field in the last twenty years or more. His notion that it became more evident as the Watergate story unfolded that President Nixon intended to resign, and that his intention thus explained his behaviour, is simply uninformed by attitude theory and research (Eagly and Chaiken, 1994; Foxall, 1997a).

The contextual stance comes into its own precisely because the intentional stance does not always predict accurately or does so only when situational correspondence is extremely high. We must then look for an alternative interpretive stance. The contextual stance, like the intentional stance, derives from commonsense folk psychology and thus precedes operant experimentation. Researchers such as Thorndike and Skinner adopted the contextual stance, based on the everyday psychology of the effects of rewards and sanctions, to interpret the results of their experiments. Whether the contextual stance generally predicts consumer behaviour more accurately than does the intentional stance is an empirical question. It certainly has proved to predict consumers' verbal behaviour in research that is unlikely to have been generated within the confines of an intentional stance (e.g. Foxall 1997b). More probable than that one stance will outstrip the other, however, is that both are necessary complements in a complete account of consumer choice.

(2) Are the intentional and contextual stances equivalent given the latter's admission of the causal efficacy of within-the-skin verbal behaviour (acting as proximal discriminative stimuli)? There are two reasons to doubt a claim of equivalence. The first is sociological. The two stances represent diverse ontologies which are the bases of separate and enduring research communities. The resulting scientific paradigms are incommensurable because, socially, as well as epistemologically determined, they represent distinct intellectual constructions, each belonging to a group of otherwise-similar investigators. Because each group espouses a scientific approach to knowledge, the rational

\(^{10}\) Dennett uses 'intentional' in the philosophical sense and that is how it is meant throughout this paper. However, in speaking of cognitive psychology, which deals with psychological intentionality, we may seem to have confused the two. There is no need for confusion. Psychological intentionality implies and exemplifies philosophical intentionality: the philosophical intentionality assumed throughout the paper is therefore inclusive of the psychological intentionality used to exemplify the intentional stance. Mention of cognitive psychology is illustrative of the intentional stance; it employs a psychological theory which can be comprehended within that stance without contravening the philosophical tenor of its intentional position.
basis of their theoretical processes can be taken for granted, and their adoption of empirical criteria of validity and reliability can be assumed. There is no reason to believe that these groups are composed of (or at least led by) other than intellectually capable and honest individuals who strive to adhere to scientific canons of procedure and judgement, and thus no reason to disparage their quest.

The incommensurability of these stances may reflect a more fundamental ontological and epistemological division within social science. There appears to be a situation of complementarity between accounts of human behaviour which attribute it to inner, perhaps autonomous, mechanisms and those which emphasise its determination by external forces. A persistent theme in social psychology is the search for cross situational consistencies in behaviour which might be attributable to an underlying personality structure, so is the search for situational influences on behaviour which occur independently of personal attributes. Neither has yielded to the other, though there has been an unmistakable intersection leading to synthesis. However, the fact that each has retained its core ontological and epistemological assumptions, its basic philosophy of nature as well as how to represent it intellectually, suggests that each is in and of itself a feasible and unassailable theoretical position from which to investigate human behaviour.

Secondly, the two stances may not be coterminous in their range of applicability. Their distinct ontologies and epistemologies (not necessarily methodologies) mean that they address different aspects of Lewin's B = f(P,E) formula which depicts behaviour (B) as a function of personal (P) and environmental (E) variables. The intentional stance interprets this as B = f(P,e) while the contextual stance sees it as B = f(p,E), where lower case representations imply marginalization of explicationary contribution.

Consideration of rule-governed behaviour superficially suggests a convergence between radical behaviourist and cognitive interpretations of human behaviour. This inessential equivalence is most apparent when one recognises the incomplete view of Skinnerian psychology which is assumed by commentators like Dennett. Their notion of radical behaviourism is confined to its account of contingency shaped behaviour. We have already noted Dennett's confinement of radical behaviourist explanation to the zero-order level and seen that radical behaviourism actually extends as far away from this level in its explanation of human behaviour as does Dennett's intentional stance. Dennett's treatment of 'Darwinian', 'Skinnerian', 'Popperian' and 'Gregorian' 'creatures' (Table 3) amplifies his simplistic view of operant psychology. Dennett is free to refer to a blindly behaving creatures as he chooses but, if 'Skinnerian' here includes the human animal as viewed by radical behaviourism, especially through the writings of B. F. Skinner, the depiction is inaccurate. There is no reason why a radical behaviourist representation of humans should exclude them from behaving as do 'Popperian' and 'Gregorian' creatures.

While this may suggest a kind of convergence, it overlooks that radical behaviourism and cognitive psychology are ontologically distinct epistemological systems. The ruminations of the Popperian and Gregorian creatures is apparently autonomous; the situation which they post-deliberatively encounter is entire
novel to them apart from its having been imagined within their inner environment. By contrast, the radical behaviourist constantly relates the behaviours of previewing and judging to previous behaviours and their outcomes, and to the physical and social circumstances in which those behaviours were enacted. The ultimate sources (selection and maintenance) of these behaviours is the contingencies of reinforcement and punishment that have prevailed throughout the creature’s learning history.\(^1\) This is neither convergence nor equivalence.

**Table 3. Dennett’s Evolutionary Creatures**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Creature</th>
<th>Nature of Selection</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘Darwinian’</td>
<td>One phenotype among a variety is selected by the environment. The underlying genotype so favoured multiplies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Skinnerian’</td>
<td>One operant response among several is selected by the environment through reinforcement. The ‘blindly’-behaving creature is more likely to emit the reinforced response next time similar circumstances arise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Popperian’</td>
<td>An intra-creature environment previews prospective responses and selects one. The first time the creature encounters the setting, it acts ‘insightfully’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Gregorian’</td>
<td>The inner environment is enhanced by knowledge of the designed elements of the external environment. Knowledge of such tools increases the capacity to act intelligently by constructing ‘ever more subtle move generators and move-testers’ (Dennett, 1995: 377).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Radical behaviourist research into the role of humans’ verbal instructions in determining their more overt motor behaviours invokes the ontological separateness of operant behaviourism from other (e.g. cognitive) systems. Home and Lowe (1993: 56-7) state that ‘when performing on ... concurrent schedules, adult humans will generally attempt to assess the reinforcement schedules in operation and will construct explicit rules for responding that are fairly easily recalled in postexperimental questionnaires’. However, ‘in attempting to draw attention to the fact that verbal cues and rules have a role to play in studies of this kind, we do not wish to assert that they are the only, or even the most important, determinants of schedule performance: verbal behavior itself clearly has its origins in environmental consequences and is maintained by them.’

The philosopher, Ullin Place (1993: 19) is likewise careful to confine radical behaviourist explanation ultimately to the environmental contingencies. ‘Although rule-governed behaviour... is much slower and much less fluent than contingency-shaped behaviour, it has the very great advantage that it is not restricted to what the individual has inherited through its genetic constitution or has learned from personal past experience of the contingencies in question. By

\(^1\) Plus the environmental influence of its evolutionary history during which the ‘contingencies of survival’ made their mark.
formulating one’s own past experience of the contingencies in language, a linguistically competent organism is able to combine that knowledge both with prescriptions for action derived from others and information from the same source about contingencies which would otherwise be totally inaccessible. There is no provision here for a metaphysical creation of rules.

Nor does the criticism that radical behaviourist interpretation lacks elements supplied only by a cognitive theory bridge the ontological disjunction. It seems reasonable, for instance, to point out that radical behaviourism’s consideration of consumer decision making, in which the individual comes to formulate his or her unique self-rules, lacks a vital element that can be supplied only by a cognitive perspective. That missing element is cognitive freedom. The fact that this omission may amount to a severe problem for radical behaviourism, that the consumer’s discovery of self-rules which may refer to contingencies not previously encountered or communicated or imagined, actually increases the gulf between the two systems. Most likely, radical behaviourists will simply repudiate the notion of such intellectual autonomy arguing that even covert behaviour must have precedents supplied by a learning history. At best it is to them a mentalistic unobservable which does nothing to increase the prediction and control of behaviour. Even if the criticism is accepted (by behaviourist or cognitivist) it does not negate the radical behaviourist programme. Cognitive freedom cannot simply be grafted on to radical behaviourism: its absence from radical behaviourist interpretation cannot override the provision by an operant approach of elements of explanation not considered in cognitive accounts: notably, the capacity of environmental variables to predict and control.

Note that the contextual stance is not reducible to the intentional stance, for it does not make any statement about the content of the consumer’s thought. Its statements are not of the form: ‘C thinks that by doing x she will get y’. So to speak would be to adopt the intentional stance. Instead, the contextual stance infers the behavioural rule that the consumer is likely to be following or to follow: ‘C’s behaviour is / is likely to be consistent with the rule: To get y, do x.’ If C is conscious of this rule, its source may vary: initially it is probably other people; subsequently, as C’s relevant learning history develops, it is likely to be C’s inference of how the contingencies affect her behaviour. But it does not matter to the contextual stance whether C is aware of the rule: the stance is a device adopted by the investigator in order to predict C’s behaviour, not a description of what C might be thinking. (Similarly, the intentional stance is adopted by vervet-watchers, not by vervets). The contextual and intentional stances are therefore distinct and incommensurable.

There is equivalence at the highest level of each stance, that which proposes a nonempirical interpretation based on the respective assumptions of cognitive freedom and imaginative self-rule generation. But at lower levels, those corresponding to the scientific programmes of cognitivism and radical behaviourism, the differing ontological assumptions imply fundamental disjunction. Cognitivism always appeals to events going on within the individual as she processes information about the world. Radical behaviourism descriptive language is incommensurable: it always appeals to the effects of environmental contingencies on behaviour, even when these variables are mediated by verbal
behaviour. Except at the level of explanation least intended or unintended by the authors of the intentional and contextual stances, these explanatory systems are speaking different languages and concerned with different events. The crux of the matter is that the elements of the contextual stance cannot be stated in intentional terms (except at that highest level which is immaterial to our purposes since it transcends radical behaviourist explanation and interpretation).

The intentional stance is not synonymous with cognitivism: there are too many cognitivisms for that. It is a representation of the behaviour of intentional systems based upon their inferred capacity for processing information about their current and future behaviour, i.e. for thinking thoughts an essential property of which is ‘aboutness’. Its usefulness in the current context stems from its capturing the character of an interpretive and predictive framework founded upon the ascription of cognitive events to a behaving entity. The intentional stance is a folk-cognitive psychology: it is actually antithetical to some cognitive theories, those which deterministically refuse to grant autonomy to an individual. It is therefore a philosophical device which pushes one aspect of cognitive explanation, intrapersonal causation, to a limit, in order to predict the behavioural outcome. In doing so, it goes beyond most current varieties of scientific cognitivism by positing a level of cognitive freedom which is not empirically available to the investigator, no matter how far it assists prediction. (Compare Panels A and B of Table 4). The assumption of cognitive freedom may be necessary to complete the intentional stance, based as it is on folk-cognitive psychology. But it is doubtful whether adopting this assumption is compatible with scientific cognitivism.

### Table 4. Scientific and Metascientific Realms of the Stances

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metascientific realm</th>
<th>The Intentional Stance</th>
<th>The Contextual Stance</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A. Apparently autonomous rule formulation and following</td>
<td>C. Apparently autonomous self-rule formulation and unpredictable rule-following</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientific realm</td>
<td>B. Cognitive processing (including intentional activity)</td>
<td>D. Environmental learning (including contingency-shaped and rule-governed behaviours)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The contextual stance equally transcends radical behaviourism by arguing that self-rule generation can take place at a nonempirical level. Prior to this level (i.e. to the region of the contextual stance represented by Panel D of Table 4), the intentional stance and the contextual stance are incomparable. An ontological disjunction between them is evident from consideration of how that portion of the contextual stance which derives from radical behaviourism proceeds. It interprets human behaviour in the following terms derived from behaviour analysis in order to increase the predictability of that behaviour. At the zero-order level, it first identifies the contingencies acting upon observed behaviour, i.e. the discriminative and reinforcing/punishing stimuli that influence
the rate of emission of a given response. This level of analysis leads on to the reconstruction of the verbal rules which apparently influence the individual's behaviour and their context; i.e. the prior behavioural consequences which such rule-following has generated. At this level, the rules are likely to be supplied by other people, but at subsequent levels, the contextual account seeks to reconstruct the self-rules based on the individual's introspective understanding of her contingency-shaped and rule-governed behaviour. But this portion of the stance cannot analyse behaviour to which no context can be attributed, which is portrayed elsewhere as the spontaneous outcome of cognitive freedom, the apparently automatic self-rule following behaviour which appears spontaneous and uncontrolled (see Panel C of Table 4). The ontology of radical behaviourism simply cannot embrace this level of analysis. Again, the postulation of cognitive or rule-forming freedom is an inevitable component of the contextual stance, based as it is on folk-contextual psychology: but its adoption would surely disqualify one from scientific behaviourism.

There is no reason why the contextual stance should not actively inform psychological research in general and consumer research particularly. The contextual stance can and should be used whenever the intentional stance is used. Can, because almost any act that can plausibly be ascribed to the intentional stance can equally plausibly be ascribed to its environmental consequences. Ascribing behaviours to their environmental determinants can make them predictable too. Should, because for knowledge to grow we need the juxtapositioning of opposing explanations. Just finding out the domains where (a) both the contextual stance and the intentional stance hold, (b) only the intentional stance seems to hold and (c) only the contextual stance seems to hold, would be fruitful.

Moreover, there is no reason why the contextual stance need be confined to human behaviour. Radical behaviourists make a strong distinction between human and animal capacities for verbal behaviour; only humans have been found capable of rule-devising and -following; only humans are capable of certain verbal behaviours such as stimulus equivalence (Home and Lowe, 1996). Whilst behaviour analytic contextualism is primarily an interpretive system, it retains as essential the empirical base of operant psychology. The application of the contextual stance in the spirit of Dennett's use of any abstraction that renders prediction more accurate is unlikely to be adopted within that framework, therefore. Dennett defines an intentional system as any organism or other entity whose behaviour can be the more accurately predicted by assuming that it behaves intentionally. A contextual system would, accordingly, be defined as any organism or other entity whose behaviour can be more accurately predicted by ascribing 'contextuality' to it, i.e. by assuming that that behaviour is selected and maintained by the environmental consequences it maintains. This works for animals at the zero-order and first-order levels but the attribution of rule-governance to animals is an abstraction too far for behaviour analysts. These contextualists limit their use of the contextual stance to organisms whose capacity to use verbal behaviour can be empirically demonstrated: humans. There is no reason, however, why the contextual stance should not be used by contextualists who do not embrace behaviour analysis or
whose understanding of it is more liberal than adherence to the tenets of radical behaviourism currently demands.

**Research Implications**

The incommensurability of these paradigms has a number of implications for research in consumer psychology.

First, there can be no question of adopting the easy synthesis of radical behaviourism and cognitive psychology which is the hallmark of Bandura's system. Bandura (1986) is correct to identify both environmental and personal causal antecedents of behaviour and to argue against the piecemeal way in which research has tended to employ one or other unidirectional causal relationship as the mainstay of its investigation and explanation. A comprehensive analysis must include both and the tendency of researchers to base their work on a pre-existing theory such as radical behaviourism or cognitive psychology has to date usually precluded or strictly limited consideration of that causal link with which its metatheory has traditionally been unconcerned. However, radical behaviourism and cognitive psychology are immiscible - the ontological disjunction which this paper has discussed will not permit any trivial interlinking of environmental and personal determinants of behaviour by assuming that the components of these paradigms can be detached from their ontological and epistemological bases and used to reconstitute a synthetic theory. The fundamental terms of cognitive psychology such as belief and attitude would, if used at all by radical behaviourists, carry an entirely distinct meaning and explanatory significance (Foxall, 1983, 1997c).

The task of consumer psychology is to use these paradigms separately, each to provide an interpretation of the entire gamut of factors, environmental and personal, of which behaviour is a function. An accurate reading of the nature of radical behaviourism and cognitive psychology suggests that each is capable of such universal application. Indeed, this is surely the essence of Overskied's case. But it is also the task of consumer psychology to compare critically the results provided by each separate paradigm, to engender the counter hypotheses which the Feyerabendian programme requires in order to test ideas and findings generated by one explanatory system as they appear from the standpoint of another. There is currently much talk of incommensurability in social science and consumer psychology, much of it exaggerated. But there is a fundamental discontinuity between explanations that posit intrapersonal causation and those which rely on environmental determinism. Neither will go away. Scientific progress in our discipline depends on their critical interaction.

The pursuit of an easy synthesis raises epistemological difficulties with which the social sciences are not at present able to cope. The amalgamation of these two systems ignores their ontological divergences and makes one subject to the other. Not environment but the individual's perception of environment becomes the key explanatory variable which is to make cognition the overriding explanatory system and to ignore the operant perspective. In the absence of a solution to the mind-body problem - presumably in the form of a physiological link between environment and thought, reasoning and behaviour - there is no
convincing ground for positing what can only be a trivial integration.

Consumer psychology must seek, within each of these explanatory systems separately, models which address consumer behaviour in its entirety, from its correlation with environmental events to its correlation with cognitive/verbal deliberations. The result will be precisely the kind of comparative and confrontational interplay of opposing explanations that is necessary to the growth of knowledge.

The intentional stance has always entailed an inescapable philosophical instrumentality. Dennett has argued that positing beliefs and desires is essential to making sense of behaviour: the beliefs and desires may not have any independent existence but the behaviour patterns which they render intelligible do. The contextual stance provides a similar sort of plausible interpretation of behaviour too complex to analyse experimentally but whose external correlates are too important to be ignored. We have left the world of the experimental space forever, but we have suggested a basis for a contextualistic interpretation of consumer choice.

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