

B.F. Skinner

Selections from *Science and Human Behavior*



<http://www.nndb.com/people/297/000022231/bf-skinner-sm.jpg>

Claim

- The mind and the body are completely separate entities.
- To Skinner, the mind was, in essence, enclosed by a box and any processes stayed inside, leaving the body to operate independently.
- This deviates from previous theories by Descartes and Cartesian on dualism.

Inner Causes

- Skinner first talks about inner causes and explain why these support his theory of a separation of body and mind.
- Skinner says that “an inner explanation...[is] likely to be difficult to observe” (160).
- He breaks inner causes into three sections, neural, psychic inner, and conceptual inner causes.

Neural

- We lack the ability to sufficiently study the relation of nervous tissue to how we react.
- For instance, people talk of nervous breakdowns yet we cannot connect the neural functions to how their body reacts during this breakdown.
- The nervous system cannot predict or control bodily functions.

Psychic

- An “inner man” that influences the body as to what to do.
- If the “inner man” is hungry than so will the body and therefore the body will eat.
- This explanation does not have a physical aspect and is based off the idea of something inside people referred to as “mental or psychic.”

Conceptual

- Redundant in nature and is not neurological or mental.
- “A man...smokes a great deal because he has [a] tobacco habit” (162)
- This is one idea being described in two statements.
- This makes it seem as though a cause has been found, for instance his smoking habit causes him to smoke, yet they are actually describing the same physical task.

Skinner's Conclusion

- Skinner claims that the body is separate from the body and the body acts because of what it is exposed to.
- We need to focus on bodily functions because they are observable by science.
- The chimps we saw in class pressing numbers in order were an example of Skinner's logic.



<http://www.thisblogrules.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/12/finger-monkey-12.jpg>

Questions

- Do you agree more with dualism or with Skinner?
- Do you agree that the monkey is performing the numerical task because of a bodily reaction and not a mental process that tell him to do so?