

Skinner, from *Science and Human Behavior*

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Skinner v Descartes

- Behaviorism v Dualism
- Differ in perceptions of mentality

Inner “Causes”

- **Definition:** Causes of action, or inner explanations of the behavior of some thing or person
- Difficult to observe
- Assigned properties without justification
- Neural, psychic, and conceptual inner causes

Neural Causes

- Nervous system as an explanation of behavior
 - Long trial example
- Similar justifications are still made, despite more information regarding our nervous system
 - WWI “shell shock”
 - WWII “neuropsychiatric”

Psychic Causes

- Explains behavior in terms of a “mental” or “psychic” inner agent
- Freud brings up unconscious thought processes
- Skinner counters: “But any mental event which is unconscious is necessarily inferential, and the explanation is therefore not based upon independent observations of a valid cause” (pg 161).

Psychic Causes

- Professor example
 - Gives wrong lecture because “mind” is “absent”
- Shorthand for more complicated statement
- “In all this it is obvious that the mind and the ideas, together with their special characters, are being invented on the spot to provide spurious explanations” (pg 162).
- Redundant

Conceptual Causes

- Most common inner causes – have no specific dimensions
- A man eats *because* he is hungry
- A man behaves brilliantly *because* of his intelligence
- Again, redundant

Counter v. Skinner

- Counter claims that there are two states: mental and physical
- Skinner argues that the reference to internal states serves no purpose
 - absent-mind example
 - What about piano example though? – Is Skinner right? How would he respond to this?

The Variables of Which Behavior is a Function

- There are variables immediately available for scientific analysis
 - Have a physical status – can be observed
- Glass of water presented to a man in a closed room
 - What is the probability that he will drink?

The Variables of Which Behavior is a Function

- However, other variables, such as environmental history and social factors, are capable of producing unintended results
- Adequate prediction requires information about all relevant variables